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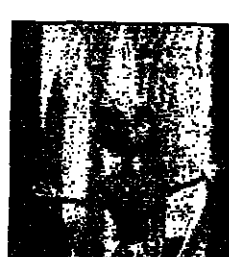
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1998 • KISLEV 29, 5759 • 29 SHAABAN 1419

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8 The Magazine

How the makolet helps the poor



7 Time Out

Anthropomorphic Antz



24 Sports

Skate Israel '98



INDEX

Business	10
News in Focus	13
Opinion	8
Classifieds	18
Sports	24
Weather	22

Settlers move to aid PM

By SARAH HONIG

Settlers yesterday launched a last-minute effort to rescue the Netanyahu government, but the move may be too late, as The Third Way decided to cast its four Knesset votes for early elections.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told Likud ministers that he is "not counting on any surprise change" of heart of the far Right and that he is "as serious as can be about advancing the elections."

In Labor, there were some warnings that the right-wingers who have vowed to bring the government down may reverse themselves.

The Council of Jewish Communities in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza is now seeking to do just that, after harshly taking Netanyahu to task for the Wye Memorandum.

Regarding this government as the least of all possible evils, the council began summoning mem-

The waiting-for-Shahak game, Page 6

bers of the Knesset's Land of Israel Front in an attempt to keep them from voting for early elections.

So far, though, they impressed only National Religious Party MKs Haiman Porat and Zvi Hendel, who were anyway bound by party discipline to oppose the early elections bill.

Molodet MK Benny Elon said he "might support Netanyahu's policy statement on putting Wye in the deep freeze," but that he "will also vote to advance the elections, because we, Netanyahu, now agree that this is best for the nation."

Transport Minister Shaul Yahalom (NRP) said that "there is now realization in some quarters on the Right that they jumped open-eyed over the brink. They are repeating the precise mistake they made in 1992, when they felled the Shamir government and brought Labor to power. The settlers' late awakening may be far too late now to salvage the best government the Right could hope for."

Netanyahu told a Likud audience Wednesday night that he will seek the Knesset's approval for his conditions for continuing Wye. If he fails to secure a majority, he will then move for early elections.

But by yesterday it was still unclear precisely what mechanism he will use for testing the Knesset's attitude. He could tie the vote on his policy to an early elections bill of his own.

No one in the Likud could tell precisely what parliamentary tack he plans to adopt, but he did reiterate his intention "not to chase after the rebels and to move for early elections."

With the die against the government already cast, The Third Way Knesset faction, citing the impasse over Wye, decided last night that its four MKs would all vote for early elections.

This would assure the opposition's early elections bill more than the minimum 61 votes needed to pass it on first reading.

Netanyahu discussed election dates with the Likud ministers yesterday.

See SETTLERS, Page 17

SHABBAT	BEGINS	ENDS
Jerusalem	4:02 p.m.	5:15 p.m.
Tel Aviv	4:20 p.m.	5:19 p.m.
Haifa	4:09 p.m.	5:16 p.m.
Bethsheva	4:18 p.m.	5:16 p.m.
Eilat	4:22 p.m.	5:23 p.m.



A pilot from US Strike Fighter Squadron 105 gives the thumbs up after returning from her mission into Iraq, launched from the USS Enterprise yesterday. (Reuters)

PM: We know how to protect ourselves

Air strikes on Iraq persist for 2nd day

By ARIEH O'SULLIVAN, DANNA HARMAN, and news agencies

As the US and Britain launched more bombing raids on Iraq yesterday, Israel deployed US-supplied Patriot missile batteries around Tel Aviv and Haifa.

Officials urged the public to make sure they have all the necessary supplies to defend themselves from chemical or biological attack.

Still, top IDF commanders insist that there is a very low chance of

Right now, Israel is keen on keeping a low profile. "Israel is not a party to the current conflict



and we have no intention of becoming involved," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said, speaking to supporters at Likud headquarters.

He added, however, that "if someone wants to involve us, we have the full right to protect ourselves and we know how to do that."

"I am proud to see the public acting so responsibly," said Netanyahu. "That is the way we need to act, maturely, responsibly and without hysteria."

Earlier in the day, Netanyahu met with cabinet ministers to discuss the conflict.

Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai urged the public to stick to their normal routines. "If, heaven forbid, there should be a

change, we will notify the public," he said.

A senior US official, meanwhile, said that although some embassy and consular workers are being evacuated, this is solely a precautionary measure and the chance of Israel being attacked is very low.

The US continues to update the government, and also helped it take some defensive steps, such as positioning the Patriots and distributing chemical identification kits, said the official.

President Bill Clinton called Netanyahu last night to brief him on the results of the attack.

Netanyahu's spokesman Aviv Bushinsky said Clinton pledged complete support, and said no attack on Israel would be acceptable. Netanyahu told Clinton that Israel does not see itself a part of the conflict.

"We can't exclude the possibility (of an attack) totally and we can't exclude the possibility that Saddam Hussein has some unconventional capabilities. We know he has chemical capabilities and he may have some biological," said the US official.

See PROTECT, Page 17

Security sources: Saddam starting to crack

By ARIEH O'SULLIVAN

Senior security sources said last night that Saddam Hussein's main goal now is to survive the joint US-

British attack on Iraq, adding that the first signs of a crack in the dictator's self-confidence has emerged.

See SADDAM, Page 17

THE SPLENDOR OF JERUSALEM THE COMFORTS OF HOME... Jerusalem Heights

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02-624-1520, 02-624-1521, 02-624-1522, 02-624-1523, 02-624-1524, 02-624-1525, 02-624-1526, 02-624-1527, 02-624-1528, 02-624-1529, 02-624-1530, 02-624-1531, 02-624-1532, 02-624-1533, 02-624-1534, 02-624-1535, 02-624-1536, 02-624-1537, 02-624-1538, 02-624-1539, 02-624-1540, 02-624-1541, 02-624-1542, 02-624-1543, 02-624-1544, 02-624-1545, 02-624-1546, 02-624-1547, 02-624-1548, 02-624-1549, 02-624-1550, 02-624-1551, 02-624-1552, 02-624-1553, 02-624-1554, 02-624-1555, 02-624-1556, 02-624-1557, 02-624-1558, 02-624-1559, 02-624-1560, 02-624-1561, 02-624-1562, 02-624-1563, 02-624-1564, 02-624-1565, 02-624-1566, 02-624-1567, 02-624-1568, 02-624-1569, 02-624-1570, 02-624-1571, 02-624-1572, 02-624-1573, 02-624-1574, 02-624-1575, 02-624-1576, 02-624-1577, 02-624-1578, 02-624-1579, 02-624-1580, 02-624-1581, 02-624-1582, 02-624-1583, 02-624-1584, 02-624-1585, 02-624-1586, 02-624-1587, 02-624-1588, 02-624-1589, 02-624-1590, 02-624-1591, 02-624-1592, 02-624-1593, 02-624-1594, 02-624-1595, 02-624-1596, 02-624-1597, 02-624-1598, 02-624-1599, 02-624-1600, 02-624-1601, 02-624-1602, 02-624-1603, 02-624-1604, 02-624-1605, 02-624-1606, 02-624-1607, 02-624-1608, 02-624-1609, 02-624-1610, 02-624-1611, 02-624-1612, 02-624-1613, 02-624-1614, 02-624-1615, 02-624-1616, 02-624-1617, 02-624-1618, 02-624-1619, 02-624-1620, 02-624-1621, 02-624-1622, 02-624-1623, 02-624-1624, 02-624-1625, 02-624-1626, 02-624-1627, 02-624-1628, 02-624-1629, 02-624-1630, 02-624-1631, 02-624-1632, 02-624-1633, 02-624-1634, 02-624-1635, 02-624-1636, 02-624-1637, 02-624-1638, 02-624-1639, 02-624-1640, 02-624-1641, 02-624-1642, 02-624-1643, 02-624-1644, 02-624-1645, 02-624-1646, 02-624-1647, 02-624-1648, 02-624-1649, 02-624-1650, 02-624-1651, 02-624-1652, 02-624-1653, 02-624-1654, 02-624-1655, 02-624-1656, 02-624-1657, 02-624-1658, 02-624-1659, 02-624-1660, 02-624-1661, 02-624-1662, 02-624-1663, 02-624-1664, 02-624-1665, 02-624-1666, 02-624-1667, 02-624-1668, 02-624-1669, 02-624-1670, 02-624-1671, 02-624-1672, 02-624-1673, 02-624-1674, 02-624-1675, 02-624-1676, 02-624-1677, 02-624-1678, 02-624-1679, 02-624-1680, 02-624-1681, 02-624-1682, 02-624-1683, 02-624-1684, 02-624-1685, 02-624-1686, 02-624-1687, 02-624-1688, 02-624-1689, 02-624-1690, 02-624-1691, 02-624-1692, 02-624-1693, 02-624-1694, 02-624-1695, 02-624-1696, 02-624-1697, 02-624-1698, 02-624-1699, 02-624-1700, 02-624-1701, 02-624-1702, 02-624-1703, 02-624-1704, 02-624-1705, 02-624-1706, 02-624-1707, 02-624-1708, 02-624-1709, 02-624-1710, 02-624-1711, 02-624-1712, 02-624-1713, 02-624-1714, 02-624-1715, 02-624-1716, 02-624-1717, 02-624-1718, 02-624-1719, 02-624-1720, 02-624-1721, 02-624-1722, 02-624-1723, 02-624-1724, 02-624-1725, 02-624-1726, 02-624-1727, 02-624-1728, 02-624-1729, 02-624-1730, 02-624-1731, 02-624-1732, 02-624-1733, 02-624-1734, 02-624-1735, 02-624-1736, 02-624-1737, 02-624-1738, 02-624-1739, 02-624-1740, 02-624-1741, 02-624-1742, 02-624-1743, 02-624-1744, 02-624-1745, 02-624-1746, 02-624-1747, 02-624-1748, 02-624-1749, 02-624-1750, 02-624-1751, 02-624-1752, 02-624-1753, 02-624-1754, 02-624-1755, 02-624-1756, 02-624-1757, 02-624-1758, 02-624-1759, 02-624-1760, 02-624-1761, 02-624-1762, 02-624-1763, 02-624-1764, 02-624-1765, 02-624-1766, 02-624-1767, 02-624-1768, 02-624-1769, 02-624-1770, 02-624-1771, 02-624-1772, 02-624-1773, 02-624-1774, 02-624-1775, 02-624-1776, 02-624-1777, 02-624-1778, 02-624-1779, 02-624-1780, 02-624-1781, 02-624-1782, 02-624-1783, 02-624-1784, 02-624-1785, 02-624-1786, 02-624-1787, 02-624-1788, 02-624-1789, 02-624-1790, 02-624-1791, 02-624-1792, 02-624-1793, 02-624-1794, 02-624-1795, 02-624-1796, 02-624-1797, 02-624-1798, 02-624-1799, 02-624-1800, 02-624-1801, 02-624-1802, 02-624-1803, 02-624-1804, 02-624-1805, 02-624-1806, 02-624-1807, 02-624-1808, 02-624-1809, 02-624-1810, 02-624-1811, 02-624-1812, 02-624-1813, 02-624-1814, 02-624-1815, 02-624-1816, 02-624-1817, 02-624-1818, 02-624-1819, 02-624-1820, 02-624-1821, 02-624-1822, 02-624-1823, 02-624-1824, 02-624-1825, 02-624-1826, 02-624-1827, 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02-624-1905, 02-624-1906, 02-624-1907, 02-624-1908, 02-624-1909, 02-624-1910, 02-624-1911, 02-624-1912, 02-624-1913, 02-624-1914, 02-624-1915, 02-624-1916, 02-624-1917, 02-624-1918, 02-624-1919, 02-624-1920, 02-624-1921, 02-624-1922, 02-624-1923, 02-624-1924, 02-624-1925, 02-624-1926, 02-624-1927, 02-624-1928, 02-624-1929, 02-624-1930, 02-624-1931, 02-624-1932, 02-624-1933, 02-624-1934, 02-624-1935, 02-624-1936, 02-624-1937, 02-624-1938, 02-624-1939, 02-624-1940, 02-624-1941, 02-624-1942, 02-624-1943, 02-624-1944, 02-624-1945, 02-624-1946, 02-624-1947, 02-624-1948, 02-624-1949, 02-624-1950, 02-624-1951, 02-624-1952, 02-624-1953, 02-624-1954, 02-624-1955, 02-624-1956, 02-624-1957, 02-624-1958, 02-624-1959, 02-624-1960, 02-624-1961, 02-624-1962, 02-624-1963, 02-624-1964, 02-624-1965, 02-624-1966, 02-624-1967, 02-624-1968, 02-624-1969, 02-624-1970, 02-624-1971, 02-624-1972, 02-624-1973, 02-624-1974, 02-624-1975, 02-624-1976, 02-624-1977, 02-624-1978, 02-624-1979, 02-624-1980, 02-624-1981, 02-624-1982, 02-624-1983, 02-624-1984, 02-624-1985, 02-624-1986, 02-624-1987, 02-624-1988, 02-624-1989, 02-624-1990, 02-624-1991, 02-624-1992, 02-624-1993, 02-624-1994, 02-624-1995, 02-624-1996, 02-624-1997, 02-624-1998, 02-624-1999, 02-624-2000, 02-624-2001, 02-624-2002, 02-624-2003, 02-624-2004, 02-624-2005, 02-624-2006, 02-624-2007, 02-624-2008, 02-624-2009, 02-624-2010, 02-624-2011, 02-624-2012, 02-624-2013, 02-624-2014, 02-624-2015, 02-624-2016, 02-624-2017, 02-624-2018, 02-624-2019, 02-624-2020, 02-624-2021, 02-624-2022, 02-624-2023, 02-624-2024, 02-624-2025, 02-624-2026, 02-624-2027, 02-624-2028, 02-624-2029, 02-624-2030, 02-624-2031, 02-624-2032, 02-624-2033, 02-624-2034, 02-624-2035, 02-624-2036, 02-624-2037, 02-624-2038, 02-624-2039, 02-624-2040, 02-624-2041, 02-624-2042, 02-624-2043, 02-624-2044, 02-624-2045, 02-624-2046, 02-6

NEWS

in brief

Mordechai puts off Greek visit

Citing the crisis in Iraq, Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai has postponed his visit to Greece scheduled for four days starting this weekend. Defense officials said that Mordechai informed Greek Defense Minister Athanassis Tsochatzopoulos of the decision early yesterday and said a new date would be set. The visit was aimed at reassuring Greece that it should not be worried by Israel's increasingly cozy military ties with Turkey.

Mordechai was to have been the most senior Israeli official to pay an official visit to Athens since the two countries exchanged ambassadors in 1992.

Arieh O'Sullivan

Mubarak meets Meretz

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak met with a Meretz delegation, led by MK Yossi Sarid, in Cairo yesterday and said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu did not keep his word to him regarding the Palestinians. Mubarak also cast doubt on reports of Israel resuming talks with Syria.

Mubarak said he was worried what could happen if the Wye agreement was not carried out on schedule. Syrians were following the Palestinians' experience and it was not encouraging.

The MKs said elections were looming, and despite deteriorating relations it was important that Egypt emphasize its goodwill towards the Israeli public. Sarid said the matter of Azzam Azzam was raised.

Liat Collins

Avital questioned on document leak

Colette Avital, the Foreign Ministry's deputy director-general for European affairs, was questioned by police yesterday about her alleged involvement in the leaking of a classified ministry document to *Ha'aretz*. The questioning, at the serious crimes unit headquarters in Petah Tikva, lasted five hours. Police said the investigation is continuing.

Avital had been suspended for two weeks when the investigation began. Since then, she and the ministry agreed that she would remain on leave until the investigation is completed.

The document that *Ha'aretz* obtained was related to the permanent arrangements with the Palestinians and possible reactions to the Palestinians' unilateral declaration of a state.

Itim

Arrested man cleared of Arab stabbings

A Jerusalem man, arrested earlier in the week on suspicion of involvement in a series of Arab stabbings this year, was cleared of all suspicion, and a court's publication ban on the arrest was removed.

The man, a resident of the Shmuel Hanavi neighborhood, was remanded on Tuesday for six days by the Jerusalem Magistrate's Court, which forbade publication of any details about the arrest. The man was also questioned about an attack on haredi activist Yehuda Meshi-Zahav, but was not charged.

Yesterday, the man was transferred to police in Ashdod, where he is wanted on suspicion of fraud and forgery.

Itim

The North prepares for influx

Hotels in the Galilee and the Golan Heights have received dozens of reservations for rooms this weekend, from families preparing to leave the center of the country in case of an Iraqi missile attack. However, hoteliers in Safed, Tiberias, and Nahariya have not received any directions to prepare for an emergency situation.

Itim

Air strike has 50-50 chance of success

US and British strikes on Iraq are aimed at hurting Saddam Hussein and the power base within his regime as well as hitting military and weapons production facilities, according to Professor Amatzia Baram, a leading expert on Iraqi affairs.

Baram, from Haifa University and currently on sabbatical at

Georgetown University in Washington, noted that some of the targets hit so far were important to Saddam from the point of view of his personal security.

"The minimum aim is to force Saddam to comply with UN resolutions by making him realize that non-compliance is very costly. That is the basic American

ANALYSIS

By DAVID RUDGE

demand and aboveboard agenda," said Baram, in a telephone interview with *The Jerusalem Post* from Washington.

There is, however, another objective, which although not publicly stated is certainly there, and that is to try and create a situation in which it would be easier for Saddam to be toppled.

"This could be done by encouraging a military coup d'etat, with a unit of the Republican Guard marching on and taking over Saddam's palace, or through a major uprising, perhaps in the Shi'ite populated areas in the South or even the Shi'ite regions of Baghdad," said Baram.

This, he intimated, could partly explain the choice of some of the targets of the cruise missiles in the first wave of attacks on Wednesday night, including the Republican Palace in Baghdad.

"Saddam doesn't actually live in this complex, which covers a huge

area, almost the size of Ramat Aviv... [It] is inhabited by a few elite families and members of Saddam's personal bodyguard, composed of his security organization and special Republican Guard units," said Baram.

"Saddam doesn't like the thought of his bodyguards being killed. He needs them and they are very precious to him. The problem is that he may have had enough time to get them out of the palace before there was a hit."

Baram, who confirmed that he "compares notes on Iraq with officials in the US administration," said the US and British attacks could jeopardize Saddam's rule, but that the chances of this leading to a coup d'etat were very slim.

"If the damage to Saddam's military infrastructure is substantial and very painful, however, it could cause cracks in the regime, with Saddam being blamed for the damage to the Iraqi military. That's not good for Saddam and presents the possibility of future danger to his survival," he said.

"We don't see any open cracks in the regime that are meaningful right now, although I have informa-

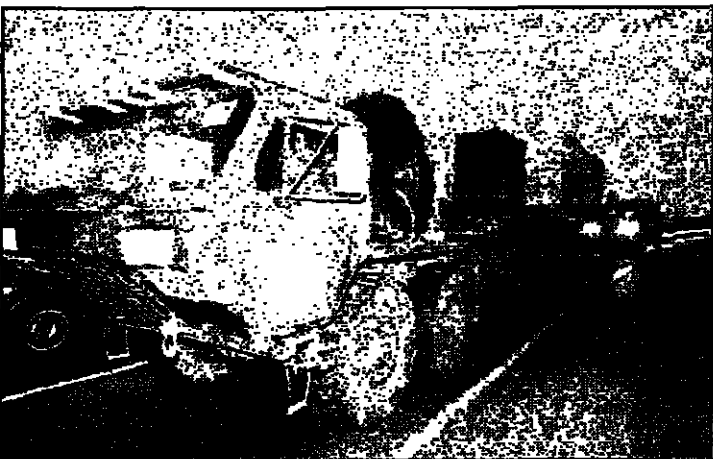
tion there were at least three abortive attempts at a coup d'etat in the past three years from within the Republican guard. The possibility, therefore, exists but we don't know if it is really there now."

Baram maintained sufficient damage could be inflicted on Saddam's military and his power base within the three-day timescale, dictated by America's desire not to continue the attacks into the month-long Ramadan Muslim holiday which begins on Sunday.

"I believe there is a 50 percent chance of Saddam cooperating with the UN weapons inspectors after such attacks, provided he has been hit hard enough and there are threats of more attacks after Ramadan if he does not change his ways," said Baram.

"It would still probably be somewhat wily-nilly, but I think that if he is more afraid of what might happen to him because of the US-led attacks, he would allow more freedom to UNSCOM [to inspect suspected weapons of mass destruction projects and manufacturing sites]."

See ANALYSIS, Page 17



Patriot missile batteries being moved to their positions in the Tel Aviv area. (Yael Somelki/Israel Sun)



Before and after photographs show shattered Republican Guard barracks and other buildings in Baghdad. Anti-aircraft batteries and airfields also were hit, the Pentagon said. (Reuters)

IDF preparing for any eventuality

By ARIEH O'SULLIVAN

At least two Patriot missile batteries manned by American marines have been deployed near Tel Aviv and another was deployed near Haifa last night, as Israel went through the motions of protecting itself from the remote chance of an Iraqi missile attack.

The Patriots are the upgraded PAC-2 type which have undergone improvement since their dismal performance during the 1991 Gulf War, when Iraq fired 39 Scuds at Israel. The batteries are not complete and more Patriot missiles are expected to be brought in over the weekend, defense sources said.

The Home Front Command, meanwhile, has opened 67 gas mask distribution centers across the country for the 13 percent of the public who have yet to update their protection kits. They have also called on the public to purchase plastic sheeting and tape to

seal a room.

The assessment among senior IDF intelligence officers is that Saddam Hussein has a number of missile launchers and 30-50 Scuds, including some with chemical and biological warheads. But they believe that he would only ordered them fired at Israel if the end is near and he has nothing to lose. Even then, they said, the command-and-control system in Iraq could be so damaged that the orders may never get out.

"As long as there is no tangible threat to his survival... he will not attack Israel, so as not to become embroiled in another front," said Brig.-Gen. Amos Gilad, head of the Intelligence Corps research department. "But if he is on the brink of extinction, he certainly may take suicidal steps, including the launching of a few missiles against Israel. We are preparing for the possibility of this extreme scenario." For now, the officers said, "Saddam is bent on weakening the US and British attack, while maintaining his strategic capabilities and getting the UN sanctions lifted."

Senior IDF sources said that the US-British attack would likely peak over the weekend and would probably not stretch much into Ramadan, which starts Saturday night.

The defense establishment was holding running assessments of the situation. The IAF's air defense systems are on alert, and Defense Ministry officials said that the Green Pine radar developed for the as yet undeployed Arrow 2 missile system is already in operation scanning the skies for threats.

Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai put aside internal politics yesterday and focused on the crisis with Iraq.

"I don't see any problem in our deployment," he said, adding that lessons were learned from the two previous crises this year.

OC Home Front Command Maj.-Gen. Gabi Ofir said that there is no need to seal rooms now. He also said that with the entire protective package distributed by the IDF, Israelis are the most protected in the world from a chemical or biological attack. Ofir said that 83 percent of the public had updated gas masks now, compared to 62 percent during the crisis in February.

See IDF, Page 17

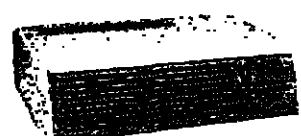
CORRECTION

The analysis that appeared on Page 1 of yesterday's paper was written by Sarah Honig.

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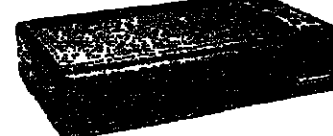
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סניף מרכזי

Security Council divided over Iraq attacks

By MARILYN HENRY

NEW YORK — The UN Security Council was divided by the US-British missile attacks on Iraq. While Washington said it acted under the authority of previous council resolutions, other council members disagreed, saying that the US had taken unilateral action and that the council had not sanctioned the use of military force.

Only Japan promptly supported the military action.

The council, thus paralyzed, was to resume debate late yesterday, although no formal action was expected.

There was no indication that any serious plans are afoot among council members to restore the UN weapons inspectors to Iraq. It was only a month ago that the council demanded that Baghdad cooperate fully with weapons inspectors. At that time, Washington aborted air strikes that were intended to compel Iraqi compliance.

Criticism and condemnation of the attacks assailed the "unilateral action" and challenged the weapons inspectors as well.

"There is absolutely no excuse or pretext to use force against Iraq," said Qin Huasun of China.

No one is entitled to act independently on behalf of the United Nations, and even less to assume

the functions of a world policeman," said Russian Ambassador Sergey Lavrov.

That sentiment was echoed by Sweden, which said that the council was presented with a fait accompli.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said he regretted that his efforts had been insufficient to avert the use of force, calling it "a sad day for the United Nations and for the world."

Among the council members there was some resentment that the head of the weapons inspectors, Richard Butler, has pulled his UNSCOM team out of Iraq for Baghdad's failure to comply with the inspectors — but without advising the council.

Further, the Chinese delegate said, Butler's reports were "unfounded and evasive."

The acting US ambassador, Peter Burleigh, insisted that the US did not seek a confrontation. But, he said, "Iraq's policy of unremitting defiance and non-compliance necessitated the resort to military force."

That was challenged by Iraqi Ambassador Nizar Hamdoon, who told the council: "The exaggerated uproar over the Iraqi weapons of mass destruction is nothing more than a big lie. The other lie is that Iraq poses a threat to its neighbors."

US strikes spark Palestinian anger

By BEN LYNNFIELD

The US air strikes against Iraq touched off passionate feelings of Arab solidarity among Palestinians yesterday, as demonstrators clashed with Israeli soldiers, torched US flags, and angrily questioned why Baghdad is being bombed while Israel is being coddled.

A Palestinian youth, Mohammed Ahmed Daoud, 19, was fatally shot during clashes in the Ramallah area. At least eight Palestinians and a soldier were hurt in Bethlehem and Hebron during clashes, according to eyewitnesses. The IDF said it was checking the incidents.

Palestinian Authority cabinet secretary Ahmed Abdel-Rahman yesterday urged that the air strikes "stop unconditionally and without delay" and issued a call for an Arab summit. Such a summit, he said, should work to "solve the problem peacefully on the basis of UN resolutions."

"What is going on now is without international legality and should stop immediately," he said. The bombings, he added, "will have bad consequences in the Arab world."

The measured tone of the comments appeared to reflect the PA's continued interest in improving ties with Washington, which were bolstered by President Bill Clinton's visit early this week.

Asked how the air strikes would impact on those ties, Abdel-Rahman said: "We have good relations, and are proud of the visit of President Clinton and we are telling him our analysis: this mili-



A Palestinian demonstrator on the outskirts of Ramallah yesterday throws a stone at Israeli soldiers while holding an Iraqi flag (AP)

tary [operation] will not help stability or the peace process."

Earlier in the day, Clinton sent a letter to PA Chairman Yasser Arafat explaining why the US decided on the attack.

In Ramallah, Daoud Talhami, a leader of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, predicted the bombing of Iraq "will render our people, in the Arab and Islamic countries, more hostile to the American policies." He spoke as

about 200 demonstrators gathered in downtown's Manara Square, many of them chanting "with spirit and blood we will redeem you Saddam."

Two masked youths set fire to an American flag, a scene that was replayed throughout the West Bank just two days after Clinton was greeted by flag-waving children in Bethlehem.

"No to the despicable aggression against the fraternal Iraqi people,"

said a banner, a far cry from the "Yes to Palestinian-US Friendship" signs that were put up by the PA for Clinton's visit.

"This action is morally shocking to our people because Israel is not respecting any of the UN resolutions or even the [Wye] accord signed in the presence of the US president," said Talhami, a member of the Palestine National Council.

"Nothing is done to Israel, while Iraq is bombarded on every occa-

sion."

"The people are saying this isn't just a strike against Iraq, that it is a strike against all Arabs from the Strait [of Gibraltar] to the Gulf," added Abdel-Hadi Hmouz, an animal feed supplier.

Ali Jerbawi, a Bir Zeit University political scientist who joined the protest, termed the PA's response to the US and British strikes "lip service." "Each [Arab leader] is for himself. You give the lip service and then you move ahead," he told reporters.

But, he added: "this should make the Palestinians think about giving a warm welcome to Clinton without thinking about the persistent policy of the US towards Arabs."

The demonstrators were divided between people who are enraged by American policies but not enamored of Saddam Hussein and those who actively admire the Iraqi leader.

"I don't support Saddam Hussein and all of his actions, but I am against the killing of civilians," said Ahmad Hussein, 23.

Mohammed Barghouti, 29, expressed a different view: "The only hope we have after God is Saddam Hussein. He represents Arab dignity, honor and pride." He wondered how it was possible for Clinton to express sympathy with Palestinian children of prisoners during his visit and then order the bombing of Iraq. "He has one heart that claims it is crying for us and another that burns the children of Iraq," Barghouti said.

News agencies contributed to this report.

Barak: PM has brought relations with US to new low

By SARAH HONG

If there is inadequate American warning about possible Iraqi missile attacks, Israel has no one to blame but Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Labor Party chairman Ehud Barak charged yesterday at a press conference. Netanyahu, he insisted, had brought US-Israel relations to an unprecedented nadir and "pushed the US into Palestinian arms."

Netanyahu pointed out to the Likud secretariat that "the very flags the Palestinians hoisted during Clinton's visit a few days ago are now being set alight in demonstrations of support for Saddam Hussein and Iraq."

Barak told reporters that "it is absolutely vital for Israel to maintain the deepest coordination with the US. We must have an intimacy of relations with the Americans and with it the ability to exert influence in Washington."

All this, however, was undermined by Netanyahu "who callously shattered our special relationship with America and carelessly pushed the US into the Palestinians' open arms. Netanyahu's misguided policies have caused Israel immense strategic damage."

"We all will all have to pay the heavy price for this prime minister's short-sightedness and the security harm he and his extremist government have wrought."

But Netanyahu was in an upbeat mood. "There are those

who tell us that the US had replaced Israel with a new ally — the Palestinian Authority. But only a day went by since Gaza and Bethlehem were festooned with the Stars and Stripes, and now these very flags are used as fuel and burned in new anti-American demonstrations."

The riots, Netanyahu noted, "have also been switched back on — this time not on behalf of imprisoned terrorists but in support of Iraq. The PA turned the faucet off and halted the riots 24 hours before Clinton's arrival. Now, some 24 hours after his departure, the PA turned the faucet back on and sent the rioters back out in the streets."

Netanyahu optimistically predicted that "the Americans cannot fail to realize that they have only one ally in the Middle East — the sole democracy in the region. Only with Israel does the US share the same deeply-cherished values."

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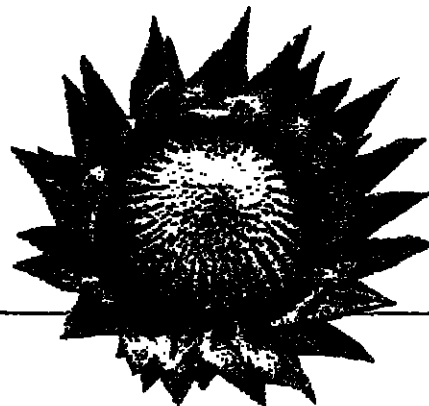
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Shoppers see through plastic panic this time

By ARYEH DEAN COHEN

Like in the proverbial story about the boy who cries wolf, shoppers yesterday largely ignored the Home Front Command's advice to stock up on plastic sheeting and tape, having been left with lots of the sticky stuff after the last Iraq crisis in February.

But even those who did buy into the need for such supplies would have found them hard to come by, in Jerusalem at least.

"We haven't gotten any, and we don't expect to have any until at least Sunday," a manager at the Greenberg supermarket in the Romema neighborhood said. "By then the war will be over anyway."

A quick check of shopping baskets failed to turn up any tape, and few if any store owners reported much demand. "We didn't even think about it," said one woman as she piled her pre-Shabbat shopping into her cart.

"We carry the tape all year, but there isn't any special demand now," said David Otmazgin, manager of the Co-Op in Kiryat Wolfson. "There hasn't been any request for plastic sheeting, and we haven't gotten any yet, anyway. If we do, it probably won't be until the weekend. I don't even think anyone will ask for it - they all have what they bought during the last crisis piled up in their closets."

At Ace Hardware in Talpiot, there was plastic sheeting and tape available, but manager Frank Benaish said "there isn't any mass buying like the last time." Meanwhile, various institutions were making plans just in case, aimed mainly at calming nerves more than anything else.

Students at the Hebrew University's Rothberg School for Overseas Students were being given access to phone lines to make calls home to let them know everything is okay, a university spokeswoman said. The school, while generally closed on Friday, will stay open today to allow the students to use computers to send e-mail. The spokeswoman said no calls asking that students' return home had been received.

Bar-Ilan University began distributing gas masks to its foreign students this morning. All of the university's foreign students are



Two men check plastic sheeting in a Tel Aviv hardware store yesterday.

receiving protection kits as a precautionary measure. The university has not received telephone calls from parents requesting that their children leave Israel.

Meanwhile, the United Kibbutz Movement canceled a planned "peace visit" to Jordan by young members of the group, it announced yesterday. The deci-

sion was reached after consultation between the Foreign Ministry and the Israeli Embassy in Amman.

An Education Ministry spokesman asked that parents seeking information on whether their children's outings will take place as scheduled can call 02-622-2211.

Regional information centers

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Calmness prevails at distribution centers

By NAOMI SIMONS

The gas mask distribution center on Rehov Shmuel Hanavi in Jerusalem was prepared to deal with a rush of takers yesterday.

But as it turned out, there were no large crowds and most who came to update their masks seemed to agree that there was little need for panic.

Carts filled with masks of different sorts were piled up to the ceiling of the warehouse, and barriers had been set up in anticipation of long lines.

"I am not particularly worried," said one man, carrying away six masks for his family. "I just thought it was time to do this. I

haven't changed mine for more than five years."

Some people brought their families along, as if for a holiday excursion, and the mood was generally relaxed. There were more than enough soldiers ready to assist - pointing people in the right direction, giving demonstrations of how to apply the masks, offering glasses of cola to small children, and engaging in banter about Saddam Hussein's prospects.

"The service has been very good," said Ariela Rina of Ma'aleh Adumim, before being helped into one of the masks used for demonstrations.

"Everyone is very relaxed

because we have had experience in this before," said Yoram Ohayon of Malha, one of the soldiers answering inquiries.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Tourism issued a statement saying there are sufficient gas masks for all tourists here. If masks became necessary, hotel guests will be supplied by their hotels, and others will be able to obtain them in exchange for a NIS 200 deposit at selected Hamashbir Lezarchan and Bonmart department stores.

Tourism Minister Moshe Katsav instructed the ministry's director-general, Shabtai Shai, to set up an emergency team to deal with any situation that might arise as a result of the current crisis in Iraq.

No panic, no lines, no masks

By MICHAEL YUDELMAN

Anyone who tried to find out where to get or exchange a gas mask by calling the number supplied on Israel Radio yesterday did not get very far. The number - 1255111 - was constantly busy.

In two hours of automatic dialing, I managed twice to get through to a recording, which repeated itself for some 20 minutes before the line was disconnected.

In the early evening, the gas mask station on Rehov Sprinzak in Tel Aviv was open. There was no panic, no lines, and no masks, as it turned out.

About 15 soldiers were standing around idly, chatting among

themselves. Then, an elderly woman came by. "I wanted to ask..." she began.

Three women soldiers and two men swooped on her, apparently excited at finally having something to do. They all spoke at once, assuring her that her mask was fine, it was working, see, the filter is in good shape, had just been changed a month and a half ago.

I asked if I could get a gas mask for a family member who does not yet have one, adding that I had his identity number.

"How come he doesn't have one?" a woman soldier inquired.

"He never thought it was necessary," I said.

"What, since the Gulf War?"

another soldier asked.

They all appeared speechless at this demonstration of civil subservience. I confessed this was true. "No problem," a young soldier at the door to a large empty hall said. "You can get a mask for him. Only not today, because our computer is down. That is, we have no computer link. Yet."

"Besides," said another, "we haven't received any masks yet; we're still waiting for the delivery. So we couldn't give you one anyway."

"Does this mean I have to come here again?" I asked.

"Don't worry," one soldier said. "There's no line, there hasn't been any line, and there won't be any. You can come any time."

Health Ministry prepares for the worst

By JUDY SEGEL

Health Minister Yehoshua Matza last night convened 200 leaders of the health system to coordinate preparations in the event of a conflict in the Gulf that would involve the Israeli civilian population.

The meeting at Sheba Hospital in Tel Hashomer included the head of the Israel Defense Forces Home Front Command, the director-general of the Health Ministry, heads of the four public health funds and directors of the public hospitals.

Earlier in the day, Matza met in Tel Aviv with a smaller number of

experts to examine the public health system's readiness for any eventuality. The ministry spokesman said that all necessary equipment was already available, having been purchased during previous periods of threats from Iraq.

Meanwhile, Cellcom installed a direct short number for its cellular phone customers to reach the Home Front, which is being manned by information personnel. The number, accessible from any Cellcom phone, is *2777. In addition, short Cellcom numbers also lead to recorded information in a variety of languages. They are

*3444 for Hebrew, *3777 for English, *2555 for Arabic, *3666 for Russian, *3888 for Amharic and *3999 for Spanish.

The Kibbutz Movement's industrial plants yesterday intensified their production of masking tape and multi-layer plastic sheets as protection against non-conventional missiles. Oded Brish, head of the Kibbutz Industry Association, said that the demand for these products has increased. All the protective products manufactured at Kibbutz Ginnegar, Hazorea, Barka, Side Boker and Gabim meet standards set by the Home Front Command.

Landau: Missiles pose international threat

By LIAT COLLINS

It is important for the world to realize the missile threat is an international one and not just a concern in the Middle East, said Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee chairman Uzi Landau (Likud) yesterday.

Landau said the US-British attack on Iraq was justified. "It should be clear to anyone involved in terror in the Middle East that there is a heavy price to be paid," he said.

However, Landau described as "ironic" the fact that US President Bill Clinton "hits out against one terrorist when the very same week he laid out the red carpet for [Palestinian Authority Chairman] Yasser Arafat - who is Saddam's partner."

Landau said the immediate aim should be to disarm Saddam Hussein of all his weapons of mass destruction, but added it is impor-

tant to also realize that not only Iraq has these capabilities but also Iran, Syria and places like North Korea.

He said Iranian missiles could reach Europe - and would later be able to reach the US - "and are a threat to the entire democratic world."

Members of the Inter-parliamentary Commission on Issues of National Defense, set up between Landau's committee and counterparts in the US, are scheduled to visit Israel next month for further discussions on ballistic missile defense and international terrorism.

MK Azmi Bishara (Hadash) condemned the US attack on Iraq saying, "After seven years of siege and starvation, Iraq does not present a threat to anyone. It's a pity that Clinton's untenable attempts to use [aggression], to get himself out of the situation he is in, will cause the deaths of innocent civilians and increase the suffering of the Iraqi people."



A woman is fitted with a gas mask at a distribution station in Ramle yesterday. (Yael Somakh/Israel Sun)

US recalls personnel

By DANNA HARMAN

The United States has ordered all embassy and consulate personnel and dependents under the age of 18 or over 65, as well as all pregnant workers, to leave the country immediately.

"This is a function of the 00.1 percent chance that he has missiles that could hit here, and that those missiles could be tipped with Anthrax," said a very senior official at the US embassy, referring to Saddam Hussein.

The Anthrax injections, which are administered in the case of sustained exposure to anthrax, have never been tested on people under 18 or over 65 and, although there is no evidence to show that the injections would be dangerous to these groups, the State Department has decided to take

the precaution as a safeguard.

"Of course people are very upset," said one embassy worker who was organizing the evacuation of his two young children. "It is the holiday season and many families really want to be together at this time. It's very depressing."

According to a travel warning put out by the State Department, all American citizens in Israel are advised to "take this information into account in considering whether they should also depart the country."

Those planning a trip to Israel, the PA or Kuwait have been warned against it.

The Canadian and British governments issued similar travel advisories for Israel, the PA and Kuwait, asking its citizens to defer non-essential travel.

Britain pulls tourists out of Eilat

Fearing a possible Iraqi missile attack, British tourist operators evacuated their clients from Eilat yesterday, while airline companies postponed flights to Israel.

Air 2000 and Britannia sent shuttle buses to Eilat hotels to collect 600-700 of their passengers to be flown back on specially arranged flights.

"I had 12 British tourists on a scuba diving course and the representatives of the British tour operators came and ordered them back to their hotels to pack," said Uri Prigal, director of the Red Sea Sports Club. "They practically peeled the rubber suits off them."

Airline companies told their clients that if they didn't leave, they would forfeit their seats on the flights, said Clive Newton of Longwood Holidays, one of the tour companies evacuating the tourists.

"This is ridiculous," said Julius Benton as he waited for the shuttle bus to bring him to the airport. "I feel less safe in Manchester."

Michelle Peters of London, who was not flying with the British airline companies, planned to stay in Eilat with her husband and newborn baby.

"We're close to Jordan and Egypt," she said. "Eilat is the

safest place in the area."

The British government, like the US, has advised its citizens not to travel to Israel, but has not instructed those already there to return home.

A British Airways Boeing 777 due to arrive in Israel Wednesday night was held until yesterday because of the bombings, British Airways confirmed.

And a Swiss Air was holding back a flight scheduled to land after sundown yesterday until this morning, presumably when an anticipated US air strike last night would be over, Swiss Air spokeswoman Dorit Tzup said.

While some Israeli tourists in Eilat also packed their bags, others arrived for a long week-end. During the 1991 Gulf War, Israelis flocked to Eilat, believing its location kept it safely out of Iraqi missile range.

Canada also advised its citizens not to travel to Israel or the Palestinian areas. Those already there should "consider departing if their presence is not essential," the embassy said in a statement.

Trying to calm visitors, the Tourism Ministry announced that Israel had enough gas masks for all tourists and that masks would be distributed if and when the need arose. (AP)

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סניף מרכזי



An Iraqi child stands amid the rubble left after a missile hit a residential area in southern Baghdad yesterday morning. The missile destroyed a house and hit a water pipe, subsequently flooding the area. (AP)

Iraq claims heavy civilian casualties

By HASSAN HAFIDH

BAGHDAD (Reuters) - Sirens sounded across Baghdad as darkness fell yesterday, and Iraq accused Washington of causing heavy civilian casualties.

While British and US leaders said the initial assault early yesterday morning was successful in damaging the country's military capabilities, Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammed Saeed Safah said US cruise missiles had hit civilian areas.

"They attacked a district of Baghdad which is heavily populated with civilians," Safah told a Baghdad news conference. The attacks caused "heavy casualties and collateral damage."

The Americans hit Baghdad security police and military intelligence headquarters along with several factories, he added.

Safah said the operation, dubbed Desert-Fox by Washington, and London, should in fact have been called "Villains in the Arabian Desert." He said the "great aggres-

sion" would fail.

Before dawn yesterday, US bombers and cruise missiles pounded Iraqi targets and initial reports indicated at least five people were killed and dozens more injured.

Anti-aircraft batteries opened fire five times in as many hours in thunderous volleys in central Baghdad, but the barrage was apparently in vain against waves of cruise missiles and bombers.

Soon afterward President Saddam Hussein went out to inspect the damage, according to Baghdad radio.

The radio said the home of one of Saddam's daughters was hit in the air raids, but she was not there.

"President Saddam Hussein today visited the house, which was inhabited by his daughter Hala and which she had left before the start of the aggression," the radio said.

"The house was targeted by the attackers and it was destroyed."

US officials in Washington said more than 200 cruise missiles were launched in the first wave of

attacks, followed by bombing raids by aircraft.

Hospital doctors in Baghdad said at least five people had been killed and 30 wounded in the overnight attacks, but there were no official casualty figures and no news on the impact of the attacks from outside Baghdad.

Saddam's response was a defiant call to arms as Iraqis braced for a second night of possible strikes.

"Our great people and our brave armed forces... resist and fight them," Saddam said in a statement carried by the official Iraqi News Agency INA. "Fight the enemies of God, the Arab nation, and humanity. God willing, you will be the victors."

Safah angrily dismissed allegations that Iraq had obstructed UN weapons teams - the US and British justification for the air raids.

Since the resumption of arms inspections on November 17, he said, eight UN arms teams had visited 47 sites of which only five had been the focus of UN charges

of obstruction or non-cooperation.

Safah said the five included an office of the ruling Baath party and a guest house. In one instance, a senior arms inspector he identified as an American national, Diana Simon, had demanded to interview undergraduates at Baghdad University's science college - a request that Safah said had baffled the Baghdad authorities.

Washington and London had "lied to the world shamelessly," Safah said.

For many Iraqis, yesterday was a normal working day. Shoppers searched for bargains, but traders said there were no signs of unusual demand. Prices were unchanged. They said Iraqis who had lived through more than six weeks of intensive bombing in the 1991 Gulf War would not be intimidated by one night of air strikes.

"We've got used to being hit. Last night wasn't even like it was in 1991 - that was really destructive. This one didn't shake us," said trader Hussein Adi.

Attacks target Iraq's chemical, biological weapons arsenal

By SUSANNE M. SCHAFER

WASHINGTON (AP) - A first wave of airstrikes against Iraq produced "severe damage to some targets," Defense Secretary William Cohen said yesterday. The Pentagon readied further attacks aimed at destroying Saddam Hussein's ability to create weapons of mass destruction.

President Clinton was briefed this morning on Operation Desert Fox by National Security Adviser Sandy Berger. "The president was pleased the first day of the operation was conducted successfully," spokesman Joe Lockhart said.

Military officials spent the night studying photographs taken by spy satellites and U-2 aircraft in an attempt to assess the damage from Wednesday night's attack.

In a series of TV and radio interviews from the Pentagon, Cohen was asked repeatedly if the first day's attacks had been successful. "I'm not trying to classify them as being totally successful at this point," he told AP Radio.

He said officials were still studying the intelligence, but preliminary reports had shown that targets had been hit. He characterized the damage as "severe" and "substantial" and said he was "impressed with the accuracy" of the strikes.

Cohen, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Gen. Hugh Shelton, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, headed for the White House to talk with Clinton.

Without elaborating on details of the next wave of strikes, Berger said, "This operation is not completed." "We know very much what we want to accomplish," he

said. "We know what the targets are that we seek to destroy or hit and we will systematically attack those targets."

In Baghdad yesterday, children headed to school and government workers went to offices as usual after the nightlong attacks.

Downtown streets were busy with traffic. Saddam's whereabouts were unknown, but he appeared on television to condemn the "wicked people" who launched hundreds of missiles.

Military officials said a second night of attack called for using 15 Air Force B-52H bombers, armed with long-range AGM-86 air-launched cruise missiles, based on the Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia.

Cohen repeatedly denied any political motive by Clinton in launching the attacks on the day before he faced an impeachment vote in the House - a vote now postponed.

"There has never been a political decision coming out of this building from President Clinton dealing with our men and women in uniform," Cohen said on Fox TV.

"Operation Desert Fox" which the administration said could last up to four days, was designed to diminish Iraq's ability to produce outlawed nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, a weary-looking Clinton told the nation in a televised address from the Oval Office.

The president said he ordered the strikes to protect America's "vital interests" after consulting top advisers and reviewing a new United Nations report detailing how Saddam had once again failed to cooperate with UN weapons inspectors.

"Saddam Hussein must not be allowed to threaten his neighbors or the world with nuclear weapons, poison gas or biological weapons," Clinton said. "I have no doubt today that, left unchecked, Saddam Hussein will use these terrible weapons again." Clinton warned that unintended Iraqi casualties were certain.

The strike, which started about 1 a.m. Baghdad time, began with US warships in the Persian Gulf launching hundreds of satellite-guided cruise missiles. To clear the way, Navy EA-6B planes fired anti-radar missiles at Iraq defense outposts. Up to 300 cruise missiles were on tap for possible use within the first 24 hours, military officials said.

The Pentagon announced it was sending extra planes and troops to the area, including 10 F-117 Stealth fighters. Patriot antimissile units and troops including military police, communications specialists and Special Forces units.

Cohen said the decision to use force had been long in the making. "Iraq has exhausted all patience," he said.

Berger said the president was warned by aides to attack "swiftly, with the least possible warning and the greatest degree of effectiveness." Albright said the attacks were not designed to "get Saddam Hussein." But she said the United States would step up its contacts with opposition groups.

Former President Bush, who presided over the 1991 Gulf War against Iraq, said he supported Clinton's action "as long as one American military airman, seaman or soldier is in harm's way."

Congress approves the air strikes

By TOM RAUM

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The US House of Representatives yesterday briefly set aside its deep partisan divisions over President Bill Clinton's impeachment to approve a resolution of unequivocal support for US troops carrying out attacks on Iraq.

"We must send a strong mes-

sage, the strongest possible message, to Saddam Hussein that domestic politics will never affect our resolve," House Democratic Leader Richard Gephardt of Missouri said. The resolution passed on a vote of 417 to 5.

"No matter what our debates at home, we are as a nation prepared to lead the world," outgoing House Speaker Newt Gingrich

said during the House debate, adding that the Clinton administration needed to make a clear commitment to "replacing" Saddam's government.

"I rise to say today to Saddam the United States can both govern itself and lead the world simultaneously," Gingrich, of Georgia added.

The debate on articles of impeachment against Clinton had been planned to occur yesterday but was put off at least a day due to the air attacks.

The Senate was not in session to vote on a similar resolution of support but senators of both parties issued statements of support for the US military action. One of the most conservative Republicans, Sen. John Ashcroft of Missouri, urged Clinton to make the latest air strikes part of a "sustained, long-term policy to bring about a change of government in Iraq."

Russia, China condemn attacks

LONDON - US missile attacks on Iraq polarized world opinion. While many countries called for the raids to stop, others stood behind Washington and blamed Baghdad for creating the crisis.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin said the strikes "crude and violated" the UN Charter and were "fraught with the most dramatic consequences" for the Gulf region.

Russia's lower house of parliament overwhelmingly backed a resolution accusing the US and Britain of "international terrorism."

China joined Russia in strongly condemning the attacks, while France distanced itself from the raids - putting the US and Britain at odds with the other three permanent members of the Security Council.

British officials said the strikes are not over yet.

"The operation is now continuing and, as I speak, British Tornado aircraft are engaged in action," Prime Minister Tony Blair told Parliament.

In Beijing, Foreign Ministry spokesman Sun Yuxi said China was shocked. "We urge the United

States to immediately stop its military action towards Iraq," Sun said.

France distanced itself from the attacks, but blamed Baghdad for the spiral of events that led to them.

"France deplores the escalation which led to the American military strikes against Iraq and the grave human consequences which they could have for the Iraqi people," the Foreign Ministry said.

The International Committee of the Red Cross said it had reminded Washington, London, and Baghdad of their obligations under humanitarian law and called for Iraqi civilians to be spared in the conflict.

Italy said it would ask Washington and London to halt the raids and let the UN deal with the crisis.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan expressed regret that efforts to preserve peace had failed. "This is a sad day for the United Nations, and for the world," he said.

But the Austrian presidency of the European Union said Saddam

bore full responsibility for the attacks.

German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder supported the strikes, calling them "the consequence of the obstinate refusal of Saddam Hussein to cooperate with UN weapons inspectors."

Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi voiced support, saying Iraq should recognize that its weapons of mass destruction threatened world peace.

Canada, Australia, Spain, and the Netherlands also backed the raids, but reaction in the Middle East was mostly critical.

"This strike is considered to be an act of aggression against an Arab country that was trying to implement and comply with UN Security Council resolutions," Arab League Secretary-General Esmat Abdel-Meguid said.

Kuwait, whose invasion by Iraq

prompted the 1991 conflict, put some military units on a higher level of alert.

Iran called the attacks on its neighbor "unacceptable" and said one US missile had landed in southern Iran.

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz called the strikes "a deplorable act," while India said they undermined the Security Council's authority and called for an immediate halt.

Morocco's leading trade union denounced the strikes as "an evil gift before Christmas and the fasting month" of Ramadan which begins at the weekend.

And Russian legislators had perhaps the most novel response.

Russia's lower chamber of parliament agreed yesterday to consider a motion appealing to Monica Lewinsky to help halt the military strikes. (News agencies)

The Committee for Rachel's Tomb

We are happy to announce the establishment of a Kollel at Rachel's Tomb that will be opening on the last day of Hanukkah.

The students of the Kollel learn continuously at Rachel's Tomb, from midnight till morning prayer at sunrise. If you are interested in being a part of this important mitzva and ensuring a continuous Jewish presence at Rachel's Tomb, please send your tax-deductible donation to:

The Central Fund of Israel/Rachel's Tomb, P.O.B. 1029, Derech Efrata, 90435. Tel: 050-580822
Or deposit your donation at: Bank Mizrahi, Alon Shvut Branch (054), Account No. 520770. 210420, 08, 90

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Day 1: Monday, December 21
18:00 Opening Session (Senate Hall, Sherman Building, Hebrew University)
Chair: Prof. Moshe Sharon, Hebrew University - Conference Convener

Prof. Menachem Magidor, President, Hebrew University
Hon. Elud Olmert, Mayor of Jerusalem
Mr. Shalom P. Doron, Chairman, B'nai Brith World Center
Dr. h.c. Johannes Geisler, Director, Konrad Adenauer Foundation

Day 2: Tuesday, December 22 - Maierdsdorf Faculty Club
9:30 - 11:00 Session I: Revelation and its Interpretation
Chair: Prof. Yonatan Tor, Hebrew University

Prof. Yair Zakovitch, Hebrew University
Prof. Justin Taylor, Ecole Biblique, Jerusalem
Mr. Umar Badriyyeh, Hebrew University

11:30 - 13:00 Session III: Millenarism, Liturgy and Mysticism:
The Case of Jerusalem -
Chair: Prof. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, Hebrew University

Fr. Marcel Dubois, Hebrew University
Prof. Ora Limor, Open University
Prof. Moshe Idel, Hebrew University

14:30 - 16:00 Session IV: Judaism and Islam
Chair: Prof. Menachem Ben-Sasson, Rector, Hebrew University

Prof. Hagai Ben-Shammai, Hebrew University
Prof. Khalid Athamina, Bir Zeit University
Prof. Uri Rubin, Tel Aviv University

17:30 Session V: Jerusalem - History, Memory and Hope
Chair: Prof. Bernard Lewis, Princeton University, New Jersey, USA

Prof. Richard Landes, Boston University, Massachusetts, USA
Prof. Guy Strommen, Hebrew University
Dr. Murad Wahhab, Ain Shams University, Cairo, Egypt (EAB)

Day 3: Wednesday, December 23 - Maierdsdorf Faculty Club
9:00 - 11:00 Session VI: Temple, Messiah and Antichrist
Chair: Prof. Lee I. A. Levine, Hebrew University

Prof. Albert Baumgarten, Bar Ilan University
Mr. Laurence Vianes, Université Stendhal, Grenoble, France
Prof. Mehmet Pacaci, Department of Divinity, Ankara University, Turkey
Prof. Lawrence I. Conrad, Wellcome Institute, London, England

11:30 - 13:00 Session VII: Tradition and Modern Eschatological Thought
Chair: Prof. Avigdor Shinar, Hebrew University

Prof. Itzhak M. Gafni, Hebrew University
Prof. Paul Mosley, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand
Mr. Maria Leppanen, Abo Academy University, Abo, Finland

14:30 - 16:00 Session VIII: The Visual Dimension of Time and Space
Chair: Khader Salameh, Islamic Museum and Library (al-Aqsa)

Prof. Bezalel Narkis, Hebrew University
Prof. Ramesh Kishore, Hebrew University
Dr. Rachel Milstein, Hebrew University

17:00 - 18:30 Closing Session: Messianic Hopes and Political Realities in Jerusalem
Chair: Prof. Myriam Rosen-Ayalon, Hebrew University

Prof. Avner Regev, Hebrew University
Prof. Bassam Tibi, Harvard University, USA; University of Göttingen, Germany
Prof. Brenda Brasher, Mount Union College, Ohio, USA

Drive Carefully

NEWS

in brief

Report: Uganda buys 62 Soviet tanks from Israel

Uganda procured 62 T-55 Soviet-era tanks last month through an Israeli arms dealer, and most of them "are junk," the government-owned New Vision newspaper said yesterday. It said Uganda purchased them from Amos Golan, believed to be a former IDF colonel now working for a company called Silvershadow Ltd. Opposition legislator Aggrey Awori said the government paid \$750,000 each for the tanks, three times the going price for tanks in their poor condition. He accused the government of buying them to supply the east Congolese rebellion. The T-55 tank was manufactured from 1953 to 1981. AP

US senator hands Assad letter from Netanyahu

The chairman of the US Senate's intelligence committee said yesterday that he carried a message from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to Syrian President Hafez Assad. But Arlen Specter (Rep.-Penn.), did not disclose the contents of the letter. Specter, who was here earlier in the week, has shuttled between Israel and Syria several times this year. Specter and Assad also discussed Iraq in their meeting Wednesday, hours before the United States and Britain launched air and missile attacks. AP

Bezeq workers put off sanctions

Bezeq's works committee yesterday postponed sanctions planned for yesterday in protest against "unilateral moves" by the government towards privatization of the public telecommunications company. The union decided to delay the sanctions due to developments in the Persian Gulf. Judy Siegel

Poland honors Shevah Weiss

In a festive ceremony in Warsaw this week, MK Shevah Weiss (Labor) was awarded Poland's prestigious Brother Albert Award for his work in furthering Polish-Jewish dialogue and building a bridge between the two countries. Previous recipients of the award include Mother Teresa and Lech Walesa. The Polish prime minister, foreign minister, and other dignitaries attended the ceremony as did Knesset Speaker Dan Tichon. Liat Collins

Absorption Ministry opens Internet site

Immigrants and potential immigrants can now get their information on-line, thanks to the new web site opened by the Absorption Ministry. The site can be found at <http://www.moia.gov.il> and includes instructions for the first steps an immigrant should take on arrival. The site also includes the addresses and hours of various bodies, including Kipat Holim offices, National Insurance Institute offices, and the Absorption Ministry and other ministry offices in areas known to have a large immigrant population. There are also links to 22 other sites of institutions offering assistance to immigrants. The site offers the information in English, Hebrew and Russian. Aryeh Dean Cohen

The waiting-for-Shahak game

ANALYSIS

"Sources close" to former chief of General Staff Amnon Lipkin-Shahak announced loudly yesterday - and hardly for the first time - that he had already made up his mind to run for prime minister at the head of a yet-unlaunched centrist list.

But the only comment which could be elicited from Shahak was that he has no sources close to him.

Eventually, of course, the waiting-for-Shahak game will have to end, because, presumably, Shahak will have to get off the fence. In the meantime, there are clearly those interested in drawing him to a new party configuration.

Yet even among the many self-proclaimed centrists, there are many who ardently prefer that he disappear and not wrest the nomination and leadership of the unborn party from them.

The untested Shahak myth is also generating trepidation in the large parties. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, an astute reader of polls, knows that Shahak could beat him in a second round, so he has taken great pains to deny him the centrist posture, referring to him as a "leftist."

Labor absolutely dreads Shahak, fearing that he might even edge Ehud Barak out in

the first round of the upcoming prime ministerial contest. Barak, therefore, is reported to be ready to do almost anything to keep Shahak out of the race. He even promised to embrace Shahak if he joins Labor. Whether Shahak will be enticed by a Barak embrace is yet to be seen.

Further left, Meretz leader Yossi Sarid categorized a Shahak candidacy on a centrist ticket as "a dangerous ego trip for which there is no place these days. The only way to get rid of Bibi is not to split forces."

Sarid has good reason for apprehension, not only out of comradely concern for Barak. Chances are that a new centrist list, headed by Shahak, will not only sideswipe the Likud, but also smash hard into Labor and Meretz.

Not so a Ronni Milo-Dan Meridor combination alone, which would be irksome to both large parties but not downright dangerous.

A list headlined by Shahak can, however, wreak havoc in the Left.

Wagging Labor tongues already speak of a line of Laborites ready to quit the party

and join Shahak. No amount of denials from Haim Ramon, Avraham Burg, and Nissim Zivili has removed their names from the potential defectors' list.

Even Shimon Peres has been put on it - despite the fact that rumor-mongers persistently repeat a claim that Shahak derisively likens Barak to loser Peres, while comparing himself to winner Yitzhak Rabin.

What may foil defections far more effectively than castigation from Laborites may be the fact that things are getting awfully crowded in the as yet non-existent centrist party, and the air is already rife with hints of infighting, to the extent that not all are sure that there will necessarily be only one centrist list.

Some, for instance, say that Meridor wants to run for prime minister and will strike out on his own if Shahak grabs the nomination.

Then there are claims that Shahak is not at all eager to take Labor exiles under his wing, as they could rob him of his claim to be a nonaligned centrist. Someone like Peres, especially, would stick a giant label of identification on any new list.

From the Likud come insinuations that Shahak might be saddled with Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, possibly not too glad a tiding for him, as the two had a very disharmonious relationship in the IDF.

Mordechai is mentioned as having taken severe umbrage at the fact that Ariel Sharon supplanted him as Netanyahu's second in command. Like David Levy, Mordechai does not take anything perceived as a personal insult lightly, and therefore is regarded as just as difficult to get along with, a fact which might put Shahak off as well. This although a Shahak-Mordechai combination might be politically potent.

Yet Mordechai might not like to come under Shahak's unfriendly command again or vie for a slot on a centrist list with the likes of Milo and Meridor.

Sounds complicated and may get even more so. We may find Netanyahu and Barak in the running, with one or two centrists as spoilers. But Labor also fears an Arab candidate, who might hurt Barak in the first round, while the Likud is haunted by the specter of a far-right entry - Ze'ev Begin or Uzi Landau.

One thing is certain - it won't be boring.



Mickey meets the premier

Mickey Mouse and friends, here as part of a celebration marking the Disney character's 70th birthday, meet Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, his wife, Sara, and sons Yair and Avner, at the Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem yesterday. The characters were part of the fun at a Hanukkah party for children of the office's employees. (Flash 90)

Possible election scenarios

By LIAT COLLINS

Despite the tense pre-election atmosphere in advance of Monday's Knesset session and votes, the soonest elections could be held in two months - even if Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu himself decides to bring the elections forward.

If the government falls in a no-confidence motion, which needs the support of 61 MKs to pass, elections must be held in 60 days. There are three no-confidence motions on Monday's agenda, submitted by Meretz, United Torah Judaism, and The Third Way.

The bill calling for the Knesset's dissolution - the so-called early elections bill - also requires the support of 61 MKs. If it passes, it returns to the Knesset Law Committee, which will prepare it for its second and third readings. During this period, a date for new elections would presumably be agreed upon.

According to law professor and Meretz MK Amnon Rubinstein, the committee chairman, MK Hanan Porat (NRP), can sit on the early elections bill for up to six months, not including the spring recess period of nearly a month.

Should a no-confidence motion pass, it would mean the present cabinet immediately becomes a "caretaker government" until a new government is formed. The same caretaker situation would prevail once an early elections bill passes its final reading.

Knesset prepares for 'Super Monday'

By LIAT COLLINS

Preparations continued yesterday for what has become known as "Super Monday," the scheduled no-confidence motions, and first reading of the bill for the dissolution of the Knesset and early elections.

Labor whip Elie Goldschmidt held a short faction meeting at which it was decided that he and Labor MK Haim Ramon, one of the initiators of the early elections bill, would speak to coalition MKs who had previously backed the idea of toppling the government

and call on them not to abandon the idea because of the prime minister's hard-line statement on Wye.

The targeted MKs apparently include Geshet's Michael Kleiner, head of the Land of Israel Front, and Likud's Ze'ev (Benny) Begin.

Likud and Coalition whip Meir Sheerit said he would convene a Likud faction meeting Monday afternoon before the votes to discuss its stand. The main choices are to leave the vote on the first reading of the early elections bill as a no-confidence motion, which if passed means elections in 60 days, or to drop the no-confidence

motion and just hold the regular first reading and begin discussions on a date for the polls.

In either case, the move would require the support of 61 MKs to pass.

Sheerit said he expects the trend will be to rescind the no-confidence motion on the early elections bill and then support the bill. He is in favor of going to the polls as soon as possible.

"For months I have called for either a national unity government - for which there is now a zero chance - or elections," Sheerit said.

Knesset Speaker Dan Tichon, speaking from Poland during an official visit, also concluded the move would probably be to support the early elections bill and agree on a date.

He said the date of April 27, which has been mooted, is a practical one - coming after Independence Day, but before "the famous May 4," when Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat has said he would unilaterally declare a Palestinian state.

Sheerit, however, favors holding elections by mid-March. This would give the elected government a chance to get organized before May 4, even if it is necessary to hold a second round of polling for the prime minister two weeks after the first vote.

Knesset Law Committee chairman Hanan Porat (National Religious Party) said yesterday he would initiate an urgent meeting of the committee Monday to discuss a possible amendment to the Basic Law - whereby, even in the case of a no-confidence motion, early elections would be held within 90 to 100 days from the vote, instead of 60 days.

Also Monday, the Knesset is scheduled to vote on the first reading of a bill by MKs Uzi Landau (Likud) and Yossi Beilin (Labor) calling for the abolition of the Direct Elections system. Landau said he believes it would be feasible to pass the bill in all three readings, even if the elections are brought forward.

Tichon said that although he didn't like either electoral system, he would vote to go back to the old one, in the hope that certain changes would be made to it, including raising the electoral threshold. Such a change would in theory reduce the number of small parties making strong demands in return for promising to join a coalition.

The Third Way secretariat had a meeting yesterday at which it was decided to support early elections as soon as possible. They called on other centrist bodies and figures to join the party.

With deep sorrow we announce the passing of

ZVI CASPI ז"ל

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22 Grandchildren



Jerusalem College of Technology - Machon Lev deeply mourns the passing of its dear friend

MOSHE TAUB ז"ל

and extends deepest condolences to his wife Malka ז"ל and the family

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

Prof. Joseph S. Bodenheimer, President JCT On behalf of the faculty, staff and students

Bikur Cholim Hospital in Jerusalem mourns the passing of

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who munificently contributed toward the renovation of the Ear, Nose and Throat Department and sends its condolences to his widow Malka Taub

In the pursuit of good deeds and in the rebuilding of Jerusalem, may you seek purpose and find solace.

The Board of Directors and Staff



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איש דם וישר, יושב אדלום, ירא אלוהים וסר בורע and we extend our heartfelt condolences to Phil and the family ז"ל

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

The Board, Staff and Students



Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

extends deepest condolences to its dear friend

S. Daniel Abraham

and the entire family

on the death of their

MOTHER

Lord Weidenfeld of Chelsea Chairman of the Board of Governors

Prof. Avishay Braverman President

Our heartfelt condolences to S. Daniel Abraham and Judith Steinberg friends and major benefactors to our hospital who have made a dramatic impact in Israel in the fields of health, gerontology, education and in Israel's quest for peace

and to Jeremiah Abraham

and all their families

on the loss of their beloved mother

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Dogs of war

Self-righteous hypocrisy, vindictive rage, wire-tapped friends, and a disregard for public opinion have allowed the Clinton-hating sector of the Republican Party to waste a year and lots of public money showcasing just how unpleasant the American Right can be.

But one of their number reached an all-time low on Wednesday night with an unprecedented attack on the president's decision to commit US forces to bombing Saddam Hussein's miserable regime.

Minutes after he had been informed that an attack was imminent, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott of Mississippi said: "I cannot support this military action in the Persian Gulf at this time."

This is the first time a Capitol Hill leader has undermined the credibility of a president sending troops into combat — as close to a betrayal of national interest in the US Congress as many shocked commentators could recall.

What was most insulting about the stupidity of Bill Clinton's paranoid critics was their total disregard for the commitment of British troops to the Iraq campaign.

Do they really think a man of the intelligence and political astuteness of Prime Minister Tony Blair would send Royal Air Force crews to war in order to save an American president from a parliamentary vote?

Blair beat Clinton to announcing that Operation Desert Fox was in progress (revealing the campaign name for the first time).

In a characteristically lucid and detailed briefing from the steps of 10 Downing Street, he outlined the history of Saddam's catalog of deception, "this serial breaker of promises."

He carefully explained the obvious to the uninformed — that the attack was essential right now, because of the damning Butler Report on Saddam's continuing obstruction of UN arms inspectors, his missing and concealed mountains of dangerous arms, and the "no more warnings" ultimatum the allies gave Saddam in November.

A certain poignancy was added to Blair's announcement by a gently blinking Christmas tree on the steps just behind him — this is not a season in which any British leader would lightly send their boys and girls to a remote war.

Senator Lott and his ilk had been assured by the security and state sectors of the administration, and especially by the former Republican senator from Maine, Defense Secretary William Cohen, that the deci-

sion to attack was objective and essential.

Hold your nose

Yet Lott continued to whine that "the timing and the policy are subject to question," while Lawrence Eagleburger, of all people, a former George Bush aide, said: "the timing stinks, frankly."

Congratulations to Lott and company. They now share a seat on the same conspiracy theory bandwagon as Egypt's terrorist organization, Moslem Brotherhood. The Supreme Guide of the America-hating Brotherhood, Mostafa Mashour, said at about the same time as Lott's statement: "We

condemn the arrogant Americans for making their brutal attacks to divert attention from Clinton's impeachment hearings."

Republican critics also sounded remarkably like mainstream Arab leaders. These are the ones who roundly detest and fear Saddam Hussein, but who are too gutless to say so, or to give the United States and Britain credit for once again saving their hides.

So, in an hour demanding total national unity behind US and allied British servicemen, Republicans were all over the television screens babbling incoherently about "Clinton's attempt to change the subject" in the House from impeachment to Iraq.

They backed their theory with juvenile references to Wag the Dog, a silly movie about a president who concocts a war to divert attention from a sexual affair. What they failed to produce was one "for instance" scenario of how exactly Clinton managed to manufacture the crisis and pre-position aircraft carriers so precisely that yesterday's impeachment vote in the House of Representatives might be delayed. Perhaps he's in cahoots with Saddam!

Who's the enemy?

It did seem unthinkable, in a Republican strategic analysis derived from a cheap movie, that maybe it might have been Saddam Hussein who sought to exploit a window of opportunity while Clinton was caught on Air Force One between the Scylla of the Middle East, and the Charybdis of impeachment.

The fact that the Pentagon and State Department were fully prepared for such a ploy, enabling Clinton to call Saddam's bluff instantly, might have merited a word or two of commendation all around. But no, not from the dogs of the war on Clinton.

See COLUMN ONE, Page 17

Column One



Thomas O'Dwyer



President Bill Clinton, sitting next to Vice President Al Gore in the Oval Office of the White House yesterday, responds to reporters' questions about the impeachment hearings and the attacks against Iraq.

Republicans ready for impeachment debate

WASHINGTON (Reuters) — Republican House leaders prepared yesterday to reschedule the debate on President Bill Clinton's impeachment for today and tomorrow, despite continued military strikes against Iraq.

With a rising tide of Republican support for impeachment appearing to doom Clinton's chances in the House, aides to the Republican leaders said they expected 16 hours of debate on four articles of impeachment, alleging perjury, obstruction of justice and abuse of power by Clinton.

But before incoming Speaker Bob Livingston could announce the new schedule, Democrats blasted the plan and the House went into a one-hour recess as top Republican leaders rushed to a meeting in Livingston's nearby office to work out the details.

"We would look down upon any

activity of this body to go forward with impeachment while American men and women are engaged in armed conflict," said Rep. David Bonior of Michigan, the No. 2 Democrat in the House.

The debate had been scheduled for yesterday, but was postponed after Clinton ordered military strikes against Iraqi targets. A second wave of attacks was launched yesterday even as Republican leaders made their decision to push ahead.

Some Democrats reacted with resignation to the new plan, as a flood of recent pro-impeachment announcements by previously undeclared Republicans have crushed Clinton's last hopes of prevailing in the House and staving off only the second presidential impeachment trial in history.

Reps. Heather Wilson of New

Mexico and Steve Horn of California said yesterday they would vote to impeach.

"I have reached this conclusion with a profound sense of sadness," Wilson said.

Clinton, who would not be removed from office unless two-thirds of the Senate found him guilty, needed about 15 Republicans to support him in the House. Most vote counters said it appeared unlikely he could get them.

"At this point it looks like they've made the decision to impeach the president the week before Christmas, and that's what they're going to do," said Rep. Tom Barrett, a Wisconsin Democrat and Judiciary Committee member.

"I don't think there is a good time to impeach the president," he said.

House of Lords orders new Pinochet immunity hearing

LONDON (Reuters) — Britain's highest court yesterday ordered a fresh hearing into whether former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet is immune from prosecution, setting aside a previous ruling that he is not.

In an unprecedented move, the House of Lords declared its previous judgement null, on the

grounds that one of the judges involved was biased because of a close association with human rights organization Amnesty International.

Pinochet is being detained in Britain while Spain seeks his extradition to face charges of murder, torture and kidnapping of its citizens during his 17-year rule

which ended in 1990.

On November 25, a panel of five Law Lords ruled by a majority of one that he had no immunity from prosecution as a former head of state.

One of the three judges who ruled against Pinochet, Lord Hoffmann, is chairman of Amnesty's charitable arm.

'Shakespeare in Love' gets six nominations

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. (AP) — *Shakespeare in Love*, a rollicking movie romance about the Bard as a struggling young playwright, received six Golden Globe nominations yesterday, giving it a possible boost come Oscar time.

It tied with *The Truman Show* for the most nominations.

Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* received five nomi-

nations from the Hollywood Foreign Press Association.

The Golden Globes are sometimes a bellwether for the Academy Awards and will be given out January 24.

Among the surprises were the dramatic picture nomination for *The Horse Whisperer* and the snub of *The Thin Red Line* and *Pleasantville*.

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Facing reality

After two-and-a-half years of never quite leaving campaign mode, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu seems to have given the nod to the real thing.

Netanyahu deserves credit for finally putting his government out of its misery, rather than continuing to chase after ever-narrowing margins of survival. Though it is Netanyahu's government that is failing, the opposition will also have what to answer for before the voters.

In a speech before the Likud faithful on Wednesday, Netanyahu laconically announced that he will put to a vote the conditions the government has set for unfreezing the Wye Agreement, and if he cannot get a majority to back them he will call for new elections.

Netanyahu explained that he "refused to tear up the Oslo agreements as some on the Right demanded, but equally refused to carry out more pullbacks without any quid pro quo from the other side, as the Left demands...."

Even as his government falls apart around him, Netanyahu is attempting to position himself smack in the middle - for the peace process, but against unrequited implementation of agreements. Furthermore, Netanyahu has the facts on his side: Even the opposition is not disputing his claims that the Palestinians have not fulfilled significant commitments made in the Wye Accord.

Arguably, Netanyahu has done not only what he has promised to do, but what the public elected him to do: continue with the peace process while holding the Palestinians to their side of the bargain. The Wye Accord epitomized this approach, and received wide public support. Why, then, is the government falling, just as it is arguably at the peak of fulfilling its mandate?

The answer, evidently, lies not so much in policy as in personality.

Binyamin Netanyahu has a talent rare in a politician: an ability to alienate almost anyone with whom he has come into contact. Many politicians have trouble looking beyond the next "news cycle," make conflicting promises to different people, and tend to tell people what they want to hear. There is a limit, however, to how often a leader can do this within his own cabinet

and coalition and survive. As Ariel Sharon suggested in his speech following Netanyahu's on Wednesday, the opposition did not bring down the government; the government toppled itself.

Though the opposition may be celebrating, it has little to be proud of. In an ironic twist, Netanyahu's downfall came not only from losing the trust of his coalition, but from placing his trust in the opposition. Netanyahu signed the Wye Agreement knowing that he would lose support on the Right, but with confidence that he could replace that support with an opposition-supplied "safety net."

The opposition's "net," however, started to twitch soon after Wye's passage, and was promptly yanked the moment the government began to insist that the Palestinians actually implement the agreement.

Labor Party leader Ehud Barak paid lip service in a speech yesterday toward the need to hold the Palestinians to their commitments, but the opposition as a whole has had only scorn for Netanyahu's efforts to do just that.

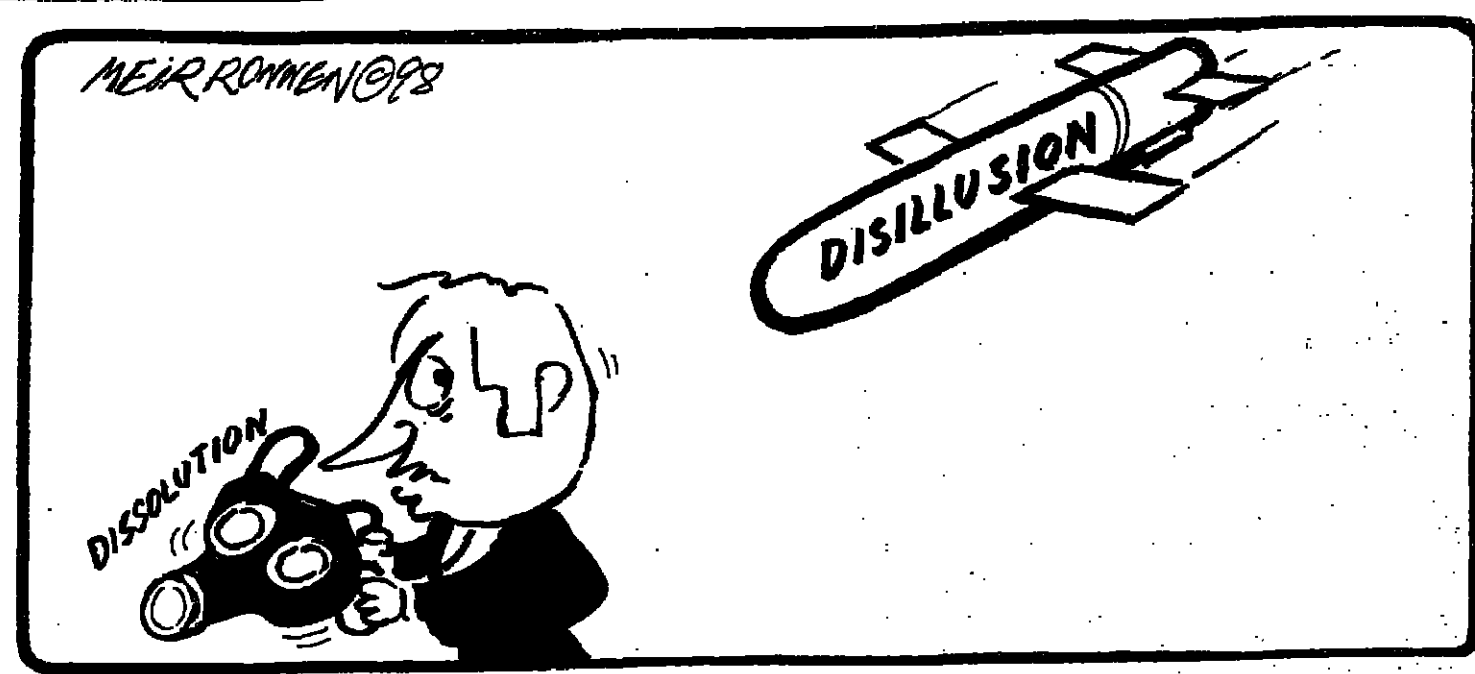
Though the government's end can be dubbed self-inflicted, the Labor Party seems to have its own penchant for self-destruction. Labor's willingness to turn a blind eye towards Palestinian non-compliance, and clear lust for power regardless of its implications for the peace process, has made Netanyahu's behavior look statesmanlike by contrast.

It is precisely the impression that Labor would not insist on Palestinian implementation of peace agreements that lost them the last election; it is a mystery why they would want to enter another contest under the same cloud.

The coming campaign will likely freeze the peace process until the election, wasting valuable time to make progress on final-status talks, even as the May 4 deadline looms.

Whatever government is assembled after the elections, it is likely that its mandate will be the same, as the current government's: to pursue peace sincerely, but with vigilance.

Whether that mandate can be fulfilled will depend on greater cooperation between the government and the opposition, in service of the consensus they supposedly both support.



Show biz in Gaza

MOSHE ARENS

without further ado turned to the subject at hand. "Now," he said, "in the presence of President Clinton, our great guest, and in accordance with the Wye agreement, I turn to you, to all of you, to support the letter that I sent to Clinton, and to recognize the decisions that we have already taken for peace. Do you accept, are you ready, to raise your hands in support of the content of this letter?"

Many hands in the audience were raised in response. One of

to gloss over these failings and to congratulate the audience for its "momentous" decision. Then he went on to pledge the support of the American people for Palestinian aspirations. When he equated the children of parents killed by Palestinian terrorists that he met in Israel with the children of the jailed terrorists who perpetrated these acts that he met in Gaza, this must have been the last straw for most Israelis.

It seemed to be a message that

The ally turns into an arbiter, and that is certainly not in our best interest.

Possibly too much attention has been focused on the demand to revise the Palestinian Covenant. And yet, a lingering doubt continues to hover over the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Is Arafat incapable or unwilling to bring about a proper revision of the Covenant?

In the first case, it is an indication that the prevailing opinion of the members of the PNC is opposed to the elimination of the clauses calling for the destruction of Israel. In the latter, it raises doubts regarding Arafat's own ultimate intentions. His repeated announcements that he is fighting terrorism with all the means at his disposal are not given much credence by Israeli security professionals. It is generally agreed that some of the worst terrorist outrages of recent years could have been prevented by Arafat and his security services. It seems that he is unwilling rather than incapable. On leaving the Gaza meeting, Palestinians were heard to say that "the show is over." The curtain has come down on what turned out to be a spectacular success for Arafat.

Israelis have little reason to be pleased. Especially since, in accordance with the Wye agreement, Israel is now expected to begin evacuating parts of the Judean Desert. These areas are referred to by the Israeli government as "nature reserves." That's also show biz.

Involving our best friend in the negotiations inevitably forces the US to distance itself from Israel

the Palestinians present afterward said sarcastically, "I even raised both my feet."

To any objective observer with a minimal acquaintance of parliamentary procedure, it is obvious that if it was the Israeli government's aim to have the PNC revoke the offensive sections of the Palestinian Covenant, that objective was most certainly not accomplished at the Gaza meeting.

THIS CERTAINLY must have been clear to the president of the United States who was witness to the unparliamentary spectacle. This is no way to change a covenant, to amend a constitution, or to pass a law. Clinton preferred

from now on US policy would be "even-handed." Israel, the victim of Palestinian terror, was being equated with the men who had perpetrated these acts of terror. One can only hope that the president of the United States was not fully aware of just who and what he was facing in Gaza and that a sober reappraisal will prevail when he returns to Washington.

There is a lesson here for the Israeli government. Negotiations with our Arab neighbors should be held directly. Involving our best friend and great ally, the United States in these negotiations inevitably forces the US to distance itself from Israel in order to assure an even-handed posture.

The Chinese curse

GERALD M. STEINBERG

By the standards of the Chinese curse - may you live in interesting times - we are indeed a cursed people. This week, in particular, the competition for headline space is intense.

President Bill Clinton has just left, after addressing an assembly of Palestinian leaders in Gaza, but leaving the central failures in the Oslo process unresolved. He is about to face a vote in which the US House of Representatives is likely to vote to impeach him, preparing the way for a trial in the Senate.

At exactly the same time, Clinton finally initiated the long delayed attack against Iraq. The results of this action and its implications, particularly for Israel, are unknown, but the gas masks and masking tape for sealed rooms are being readied once again.

And, as if this is not enough, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu has apparently and belatedly accepted the need for early elections (although even this remains uncertain), the results of which are impossible to predict with any confidence.

Any one of these events would be enough to make us nervous. The uncertainty that has caused enough problems for the past decade has been overtaken by chaos. None of these headlines (with the possible exception of the attack on Iraq) were predictable, and a meaningful assessment of the implications of the combination of events is impossible.

Clinton's visit marked a fundamental and, for Israel, very dangerous change in American policy.

By paying a state visit before the creation of a state, the US provided the Palestinians with public legitimacy, at the expense of Israel.

In his speech in Gaza, Clinton equated terrorists with their victims, and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright could scarcely restrain her tears of sympathy for the well-rehearsed children representing the terrorists. The message, broadcast around the world, was that the Israelis and Palestinians had equal moral claims and status, further eroding

exploited by countries such as France, Russia, and China, which will seize the opportunity to diminish America's global role. Any predictions regarding the world order during an extended period of American decline should be regarded with more than the usual skepticism, but for Israel, the overall impact is likely to be negative, to put it mildly.

THE DIFFICULTIES inherent in predicting and controlling events are most clearly illustrated in the case of Iraq, which has continued

The gas masks and masking tape for sealed rooms are being readied once again

the foundation of the special relationship between Israel and the US.

All of this marks a fundamental departure from 50 years of American policy, and was unthinkable two years ago.

In this environment, the consequences of Clinton's affairs and the impeachment process add another dimension to the uncertainty. Whether the outcome, and whether Clinton resigns or not, the US government will be paralyzed for at least the next two years. The ability to maintain the pressure on Iraq has already been reduced, as reflected by the comments of congressional leaders regarding the timing of the attack. Internal division in Washington will be

to defy commitments to destroy its capacity to make weapons of mass destruction.

Since 1991, decision makers in the US have been convinced that they could "keep Saddam in his box," and that the continuation of a weakened Iraqi regime under his control was preferable to the uncertainty inherent in forcing his removal. However, Saddam may be about to prove them wrong, if he emerges from the American attack, which is likely to be far too little to make a difference, and came much too late. (Instead of the six-week campaign that had been planned, this attack is scheduled to end in just a few days, with the beginning of Ramadan).

Given the failures in assessing Iraqi policies over the past 10 years or more, it would be foolish for the same decision-makers and their advisers in Washington to presume that they know how a revived Iraqi presence in the Middle East will impact on stability. In this area, as well, the future is uncertain, and the options are not particularly encouraging.

Finally, and in many ways most importantly for Israel, we appear to be on the edge of another bitter and divisive election campaign. For the past 15 years, elections have ended with a 50-50 split between the two main blocs, with small parties and splinter groups holding the balance of power, and all the evidence points toward a similar outcome in 1999. Beyond this near certainty, it is impossible to predict whether Ehud Barak, Netanyahu, or perhaps a third candidate, will emerge as the leader of the next government, and thus, all other bets, regarding the political process, the economy, and the secular-religious relations are off.

For policy makers, the lesson of this multidimensional political chaos is to avoid advisers and decisions that are based on certainties that do not exist. For every action, there will be a reaction, but it is not necessarily equal or opposite. Policy must remain flexible, with the realization that no one - even the representatives of the world's only superpower - can assume that events can be controlled. Once set in motion, complex plans assume a life of their own, and the only certainty is uncertainty.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WHY DON'T HAREDIM SERVE?

Sir, Never have I been more angry after reading an article than after reading Jonathan Rosenblum's "Confession of a Haredi Dad." (December 11.) Jonathan Rosenblum should certainly be embarrassed not only that his son is not serving in the army, but that he even conceives of a comparison between non-combat soldiers who serve their country and yeshiva students, who regardless of their level of fitness or ability, do not serve at all - not

as combat soldiers, not as rabbis, not as teachers, and not even in hospitals or prisons.

Who said, Mr. Rosenblum, that drafting thousands of haredi 18-year-olds won't improve the army? Are you so sure that your son and his peers have so little to contribute?

My 20-year-old son is in a combat unit in the framework of a heder yeshiva. I believe that he and his peers contribute a great deal to the army including idealism, spiri-

quality, love for their country, love for Torah as well as a strong desire to interact with soldiers of all different backgrounds.

My son and his friends are strong enough in their faith and their love of the Jewish people to know that serving in Israel Defense Forces will not destroy or dilute their own values.

SHARON F. HIRSH

Efrat.

BEHIND YOU, BIBI

Sir, During this festival of Hanukkah, the Feast of Lights and of Jewish bravery in the face of overwhelming odds, I am proud of Prime Minister Netanyahu. He has the courage to stand firm against the pressures of President Clinton and Yasser Arafat. Bibi deserves the support of every citizen of Israel when he demands that the

Palestinian Authority fulfill all its obligations as set out in Oslo and Wye before we make any more withdrawals.

The PM was 100% right when he deplored President Clinton's equating the sorrow of the children whose parents were murdered with the sorrow of the children whose fathers were murdered with

the sorrow of the children whose fathers are in Israeli prisons for committing those murders.

I am behind you Bibi, all the way.

STANLEY L. LEVIN

Petah Tikva.

NO REST

Sir, - The word "freedom" cropped up frequently in your editorial "Shabbat blues" (December 7), concerning Kibbutz Tzora's Shabbat commerce. The one context in which the word did not occur, however, was the "freedom" that the members now "enjoy" is to work seven days a week.

I find it ironic that this "freedom" was granted to these workers by a district labor court, a court usually noted for its spirited defense of workers' rights.

All I can say is that I wish these newly "liberated" workers well, and I hope that they truly enjoy serving the needs of young, upwardly mobile, professionals from Tel Aviv, every day of the week, including Shabbat.

KEN BESING

Kiryat Arba.

DUMP THE POLITICIANS

Sir, - We watch with dismay as our country is being reduced in size by treaty agreements and the failure of our elected officials to realize how much of our valuable land is being consumed by garbage dumps. Waste materials, by the thousands of tons, are being buried instead of being recycled into industry.

The only successful recycling program to date is that of recycling of political "has-beens," ex-jailbirds and total incompetents into government offices and positions.

Isn't it time we reversed the procedure and sent the politicians to the dumps and began to recycle useable materials.

HERBERT FISHMAN

Netanya.

Y2K SOLUTION

Sir, Fascinated as I was by the article "Surviving Y2K," and the statement that when the year 2000 dawns computers will think it is only 1900 I have the perfect solution to this problem. Let us have international agreement to recognize the new year as 1900 and not 2000 (who cares anyway) and we will kill two birds with one stone. The computers will be happy and will not go on the blink, and the nuts awaiting the end of the world can all go home and wait another 100 years for the apocalypse.

PETER MASSEY

Kibbutz Eilon

FROM OUR ARCHIVES

65 years ago: On December 18, 1933, *The Palestine Post* reported on the 13th festive anniversary of the foundation of the Palestine Federation of the Jewish Labor (Histadrut) and the laying of the cornerstone of the fourth building belonging to the federation in Haifa, planned to house the Workers' Cooperative Restaurant,

Loan and Savings Bank and a club.

25 years ago: On December 18, 1973, *The Jerusalem Post* reported that Arab terrorists had spread death and terror at the Rome airport terminal when they opened machine-gun fire. They also fire-bombed a Pan American

plane waiting to take off, killing at least 30 people strapped in their seats.

Greek authorities released two detained Arab terrorists after their gunmen began killing hostages aboard a hijacked Lufthansa airliner.

Alexander Zvielli

WE DON'T want anyone to become unduly frightened but we're all about to die.

In September, it was reported that the worldwide animal conspiracy to overthrow the human race seemed to be collapsing amid interspecies squabbling.

As usual, we were wrong. In recent weeks, an alarming upsurge in anti-human violence has been recorded across the US. For example, in early October, a California man who stepped out of his pickup to open a gate was killed when his dog passenger threw the truck into gear and ran him down, according to the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Shortly after that, a frisky French

poodle accidentally blew away his owner with a .45-caliber pistol. The victim, an ex-Marine, was demonstrating handgun safety to his mother when the dog leaped into his lap and caused the revolver to fire.

Unfortunately, those incidents weren't isolated: Michigan residents are under siege by flying squirrels. Police officer Derek Sovo told us about one attack, which occurred in Whitehall when a babysitter found one of the furry creatures in a kitchen. She then went to the basement to do some laundry, only to discover two more squirrels in the dryer. Fleeing upstairs to find clothes for the children she was watching, she pulled

open a dresser drawer and found a squirrel in there, too. She then headed for the front door, but it was blocked by additional squirrels. When police arrived, the babysitter and kids were barricaded inside a car. Sovo said.

Frankly, we think the rhetoric of the animal-rights movement has helped incite all this. For instance, Marilynne Mason, a lawyer who sues on behalf of pets, recently said, "There has been a gradual procession: equal rights for African Americans, then women's rights and gay rights. I think the next phase has to be animals."

Sounds like treason to us
(Los Angeles Times)

"MY SISTER Debbie recently returned to Australia," a colleague tells us, "and on arrival found that she had accidentally taken her parents' cellphone with her."

She was not due to return to Israel for three months so she mailed the phone back to her parents.

"Two weeks later, her parents received a message that their phone had arrived - but there was a catch: they would be required to pay tax on it."

It took some doing, but they did eventually get the phone back for free.

Zoe Kaye

No other choice

DAVID KIMCHE

The writing was on the wall. The resignation of Finance Minister Yaakov Neeman, the obvious dissatisfaction of Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, the lack of a working majority in the Knesset and, above all, the evident loss of confidence in Prime Minister Binyamin

It became obvious to both Netanyahu and Sharon that the government could not last much longer

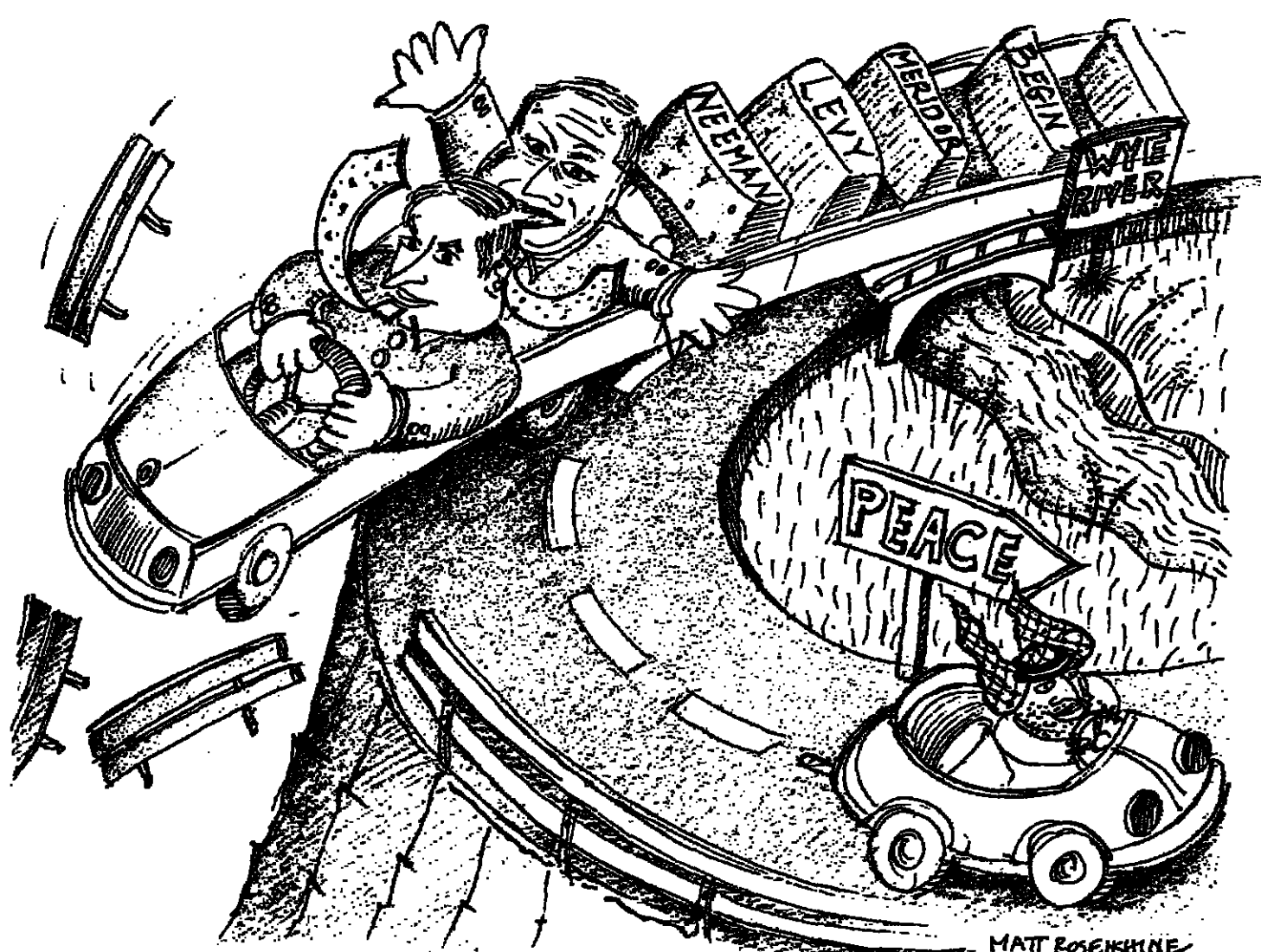
Netanyahu were all signposts pointing in one direction - early elections.

Netanyahu's dramatic announcement on Wednesday evening was made because had no other choice. His government has come to a dead end. The near certainty that members of his coalition partner The Third Way would vote on Monday in favor of early elections was, perhaps, the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back. Or it could have been Mordechai's announcement that he intended to make an important political announcement at the weekend - before the crucial Monday vote.

Either way, it became obvious to both Netanyahu and Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon that the government could not last much longer. Hence the Wednesday evening announcement.

Contrary to Netanyahu's declaration, the decision had nothing to do with the peace process or with Palestinian compliance or non-compliance of the Wye Accord. American officials who have been closely following the situation on the ground here say that, in general, the Palestinians are upholding their side of the Wye bargain, and they dismiss Netanyahu's accusations as "excuses."

Indeed, the Palestinians have every reason not to rock the boat. Anyone can see that the victors of last week's visit by President Bill Clinton were the Palestinians and that our government was the big loser.



When writer Sami Michael said on television that the Palestinians should name a street in Gaza after Binyamin Netanyahu in gratitude for what he did for them, he was hardly exaggerating. Our prime minister handed the Palestinians on a silver platter the sort of present they could only dream of. I can think of no other instance in the entire history of the State of Israel in which any of our governments succeeded in scoring so many own goals in such a short time.

In striking contrast to Netanyahu's Wednesday evening declaration, Clinton sought to inject a new urgency into the peace process. His speech in Gaza, with the exception of his unfortunate equating of the orphans of terrorist attacks to the children of those who committed those attacks, was a masterpiece.

The positive side of his new relationship with Arafat is that it will now be much more difficult for the Palestinians to ignore their commitments to peace.

THIS BEING so, we can expect

the Palestinians to comply with the Wye decisions, though our government will declare the contrary. They demonstrated that willingness by the show they put on in re-abrogating the Palestinian Covenant.

If the Palestinians do, indeed, "behave," and if the Americans publicly endorse their good behavior, Netanyahu will find it much more difficult to follow the line he took on Wednesday evening and in his radio interview yesterday morning, namely that he is going to the nation in order to ask for "a mandate to achieve a true peace" and to defend Jerusalem.

His decision to jettison the implementation of Wye and to ally himself with the extreme Right may yet boomerang on him, especially if the Palestinians do not give him any justification for abandoning Wye. Polls have shown that a considerable majority of Israelis are in favor of Wye. A large majority want to see the peace process moving toward a freeze on all movement until elections may thus not be popular,

especially if the Palestinians fulfill their obligations.

In the meantime, even if Netanyahu decides to go to the nation, this government will continue in office at least until elections are held, probably in late April. The next few weeks can either bring a return to sanity by returning to the Wye accord or we can slide further down the slippery slope toward political isolation, increasingly strained relations with our American ally, confrontation with Egypt and possibly with Jordan as well, and further estrangement with the Palestinians.

At the end of the line, Netanyahu's intransigence will have done tremendous damage and will not have achieved anything, for either he, or the next prime minister, will eventually carry out the withdrawal that he agreed to at Wye.

The Americans, having been elevated by Netanyahu, to being judge, referee, witness, and pacemaker, will not now let us off the hook. They cannot afford to lose out in the Arab world, at a time when bombs are once more falling

on Iraq and when the Middle East is once more aflame. They will follow through to the bitter end. They will examine our complaints, and will match them to the complaints of the Palestinians and they will drag us both back to the Wye accord.

And if our government does not like what the Americans will be doing, it will only have itself to blame, for it is this government that enticed the Americans into the equation so deeply, this government that brought Clinton to Gaza for the rescinding of the Palestinian Covenant, which was done no more convincingly than the previous abolition in 1996.

Given such a situation, it will be expedient for Netanyahu to fulfill his side of the Wye bargain. Failure to do so will place him on a collision course with the Americans and Europeans, with our neighbors, and what is more important from his point of view, with a majority of our own people, who are sick and tired of the excuses and the procrastination and want to see the peace process moving forward.

Middle Israel

AMOTZ ASA-EL

Remember Jotham, Dan

Asked how it is that polls habitually misforecast our election results, one pundit suggested the problem is neither in the pollsters lying about their findings nor in their interviewees misleading them. The Israeli voter, he said, tells the pollsters the truth, but lies in the voting booth.

Considering such precedents as Binyamin Netanyahu's upset victory in 1996, or Menachem Begin's resurrection from a 20-point deficit in 1981, MK Dan Meridor and former chief of General Staff Amnon Lipkin-Shahak would do well to take currently flattering polls with a grain of salt.

If anything, Middle Israelis should recall successive centrist adventures, from Rafi in the 1960s to the Democratic Movement for Change of the 1970s, which repeatedly led voters from the euphoria of initial success to the depression of ultimate debacle.

And yet, as the curtain rings down on our current political landscape, it has become imperative for our centrists to take up the gauntlet and set out to disinfest our contaminated public life.

Spotting the centrists among us is easy: they're that vast bulk of our friends, neighbors, and relatives who fight theocracy but cherish tradition, support market freedom but care for the poor, and back land-for-peace compromises while opposing everything-for-nothing escapes from reality.

The reason centrists should finally despair of Labor and the Likud, where they have traditionally flocked, is that the former's original *raison d'être* of statist collectivism, and the latter's Greater Israel dogma, have long become equally obsolete as mainstream political platforms. No one in his right mind would now return the IDF to Gaza or Nablus, and no one in his left mind - certainly not Ehud Barak - would renationalize Bank Hapoalim, Israel Chemicals, or the cellular phone market.

Why, then, do these dinosaurs continue to bicker between them as if the world is theirs to split? Because for them, fighting the other party has gradually changed from means to aim. That is how they lost the ability to feel the national pulse, and that is how they failed to detect and address fundamental undercurrents which have transformed this society beyond recognition; the Likud missed out on the Shas revolution, and Labor on the challenges posed by post-Soviet immigration.

The new centrists, to be sure, are not likely to recruit Aryeh Deri's or Natan Sharansky's constituents. They are, however, destined to galvanize the politically marginalized middle class, which rightly deserves to lead this country to a better future.

Rightly, that is, because, with all due respect, the vast majority of Israelis are neither disgruntled newcomers from Novosibirsk nor disenfranchised *melamdim* in Shas-funded schools.

Atheists, haredim, populists, new immigrants, Greater Israelites, Arab Israelis and other political minorities should, naturally, retain their parliamentary stakes, and also join coalitions. But when it comes to forging policy and accessing the national coffers, it's time their limited following was matched by limited clout. In a healthy democracy, minorities orbit the center, not the other way around.

With the center's political rationale, social composition, and programmatic agenda generally clear, the ever-throbbing personal aspect remains to be sorted out, and that, in turn, must highlight one name

more than any other: Dan Meridor. That soft-spoken, politically seasoned scion of Israel's classical right is neither a Benny Begin-type of unreconstructed territorial zealot nor a disingenuous manipulator like Ronni Milo, whose panicked flight from the right landed him pretty much to the left of Meretz.

As cabinet secretary, Meridor maintained the low profile of an efficient and modest aide, very much unlike Netanyahu's noisy, tactless, and pompous Dan Navet. As justice minister, he stood up to then-defense minister Yitzhak Rabin's inclination to compromise human rights and natural law. As finance minister, he undid Labor's deficit fiscal orgy by sharply cutting the budget. But above all, Meridor represents the great antithesis to the politics of opportunism, cynicism, and machination with which we have grown all too accustomed - and fed up.

Indeed, a Meridor-Netanyahu showdown would pit merit against power, and it's time the former got its chance to shepherd us hard-working, tax-paying, reserve-duty-serving Middle Israelis to the pastures of clean, prudent, and accountable government in which we rightly deserve to graze.

The problem with Meridor is that he lacks the killer's power hunger which makes politicians like Netanyahu and Barak tick. Meridor prospered as consigliere to prime ministers Begin and Shamir, and would possibly be happy with a similar role behind Amnon Shahak's ear.

That could be a good formula, but with or without the retired general's charisma, Meridor had better make a move, and fast.

Surely, it wouldn't be the first time humility and conceit clash in a bid for power over the one land most densely populated with worshippers, dreamers, and prophets, false and real.

One precedent that comes to mind is Abimelech, son of the biblical judge Gideon who - would Bibi believe this? - turned down a popular plea to become king. "I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you," he explained.

But the humble Gideon was tragically wrong.

In reality, his son not only sought power, but in order to seize it he "hired vain and light persons" and ultimately killed the rest of his father's 70 sons "upon one stone," a measure which sadly brings thoughts about Bibi's serial disposal of cabinet brains like Meridor, Neeman, and Begin, not to mention his effective dismemberment of the party which made him king.

Still, Gideon's youngest son, Jotham, hid, fled, climbed atop Mt. Grizim, and told a fable about the trees who sought to anoint a king over them, only to successively meet refusals from the olive ("should I leave my fatness where-with they honor God and man, and go be promoted over the trees?"), the fig ("should I forsake my sweetness and my good fruit?"), and the vine ("should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man?").

Having agreed that politics is basically a filthy game far beneath their dignity, those good-looking, high-minded, fruit-bearing trees asked the thorny bramble to reign over them.

The bramble, for its part, lost no time seizing the opportunity, and summarily told his newly found followers: "Come, put your trust in my shadow, and if not, let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon."

It's time, Dan, for you to cease to be the fig, olive, and vine. Middle Israel is tired of languishing in bramble's shade.

A prime minister in denial

MARK A. HELLER

Were it not for President Bill Clinton's presence, there would have been nothing especially noteworthy about last week's assembly in Gaza. All that really happened is that an assembly of well-dressed Palestinian notables affirmed Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat's claim, first made 10 years ago, that the Palestinian Covenant is "caduque" - no longer valid. But Clinton was there, and he gave a speech that is being interpreted as the Balfour Declaration of the Palestinians. Because of that, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu now stands accused of being the midwife of the Palestinian state.

This is a cheap shot, of precisely the sort that pollsters so much of what passes for political analysis and debate in this country. If Netanyahu is guilty of anything, it

is not of facilitating something that could have been avoided, but of insisting beyond reason on trying to prevent something that could not be prevented. His effort does not and will not change the outcome, but it does maximize the costs and minimize the benefits of that outcome to the country which entrusted him with its welfare.

However bizarre it might have sounded to the Palestinians in attendance or the Israelis watching on television, Clinton was just stating the obvious when he said that no one has a monopoly on pain or virtue. He could have added, with no less justification, what this latest incident also demonstrates so vividly: that no one has a monopoly on political wisdom. The essence of what is reading correctly the force field in which a country operates.

For almost 25 years, Israel has

operated in a local, regional, and international force field that has dictated some kind of Palestinian state. But for almost 25 years, Israeli leaders have been busy denying and defying that reality, rather than recognizing it and trying to shape it to Israel's advantage. So instead of treating the risks and costs of a Palestinian state as a problem to be contained by ensuring that the state emerges in a context of bilateral cooperation, regional goodwill, and international (especially American) sensitivity to Israeli concerns, they have treated the costs and risks as conclusive arguments for preventing what cannot be prevented.

ALL THIS accomplished was to make the problem worse, by

ensuring, not that the Palestinian state will not emerge, but that it will emerge in an atmosphere of acrimony and petty vindictiveness, unalloyed by any sense of reconciliation or commitment to a common future. Nothing sums up the problem better than the belief that the problem with what happened in Gaza was the presence of the president of the United States, rather than the absence of the prime minister of Israel.

It was always a delusion to think that denying what you don't like could yield any other outcome. Worse than a sin; this is a mistake of the sort that produces self-inflicted wounds. Most Arab leaders were guilty of the same mistake for many years, and some still are even now. And for what? It is worth in terms of mitigating circumstances, that is the mistake that for many years characterized

many other Israeli leaders, as well.

But most Labor Party leaders, and some in the Likud, eventually realized their mistake, and the most recent ones have tried to correct it. Netanyahu has not. As a result, the Palestinian state is being born, not because of Israel, but in spite of it. Israel still gives, because it has to, but its government's refusal to show generosity (or even to make an effort to mask realpolitik with a facade of generosity) means that it will get virtually nothing of real value in return.

Netanyahu's greatest failure has been his continuing inability to recognize necessity and make a virtue of it, and nothing confirms more his unsuitability for the burden of national leadership. It is still not too late to salvage something from this mess, but Netanyahu is not the man to do it.

Hanukka parallels

JONATHAN ROSENBLUM

Nachmanides - themselves men of great philosophical sophistication - feared that the stress on the pursuit of philosophical truth, even if it be knowledge of God, as in the case of Maimonides, would end with the devaluing of performance of mitzvot. They also noted that philosophy was often the handmaiden of licentiousness, as it had been for the Jewish Hellenizers in their time. Nachmanides characterized the aristocratic philosophers of his time in Barcelona as "men suspected of sexual immorality," and Rabbi Meir Abulafia's brother described them as pleasure-seekers who are secretly not observant.

THE FEARS of Nachmanides were ultimately realized. For the only time in Jewish history, the majority of Jews in Spain failed the test of loyalty to their religion. Hundreds of thousands converted during the pogroms of 1391 and 1412, most at first unwillingly, but within two generations the vast majority were fully Christianized.

Many historians attribute the weakness of Spanish Jewry, compared to French and German Jews during the Crusades, for instance, to the spread of philosophy in Spain. Not only did the fascination with universal philosophy sap the will to live as Jews, it produced some of the

worst Jew-haters from within. Jewish apostates produced an extensive anti-Jewish literature, and they played a prominent role in almost every disputation with the Church.

Even many of the most infamous inquisitors were drawn from the ranks of the Jews.

The Hassid Yawetz, one of the exiles of 1492, noted that of the 200,000 Jews who went into exile - a small fraction of the community that had once been - most were drawn from the ranks of the simple people, not the former Jewish aristocracy. Once again, only the piety of simple Jews made it possible for subsequent generations of the Jewish "enlighteners" to make mockery of their ancestral religion. The parallels between the Jewish Hellenizers and 19th century German Reform are even more striking (as Bickerman explicitly noted). Moses Mendelssohn, "the German Plato" and himself an observant Jew, taught that the ideas of Judaism are all universal in nature and fully accessible to all men. Only the practices are particular and required revelation.

His followers, including almost his entire family, jettisoned the particularistic practices in their eagerness to realize his goal of full integration into German society. Even circumcision was attacked by the most radical reformers.

Like the Hellenizers two millennia earlier, the German reformers were

eager to enlighten their brethren - by force if necessary. They feared that those who clung to Halacha would reveal all Jews to be backward barbarians unworthy of emancipation.

Where the reformers took over the traditional communal apparatus, they used their power to suppress the traditionalists. Mikvaot were filled in, the production of kosher food halted, and yeshivot closed. The Frankfurt community board banned the study of Torah and employed the local police, in the role of Epiphanes, to enforce that ban.

So where does that leave us today? Few Jews - probably none outside of Israel - are still enraged by other Jews performing mitzvot. Assimilation is too far advanced to worry that a few die-hards will turn back the clock.

Yet the old discomfort with particularism remains. That explains why it took mainstream Jewish organizations over a week to recognize the 1991 Crown Heights riots for what they were: a pogrom. They simply did not identify with hassidim.

Most Jews today pursue an assimilationist agenda, including a hostility to serious Jewish education, that posits that Jews are best served by a society in which they are as unidentifiable as possible. It is an agenda leading directly to the Jewish graveyard, just as it would have if their historical predecessors had succeeded.

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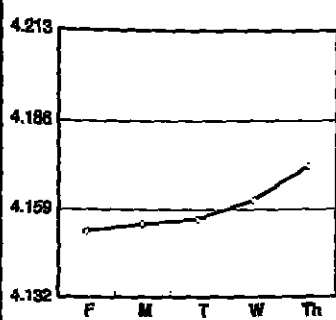
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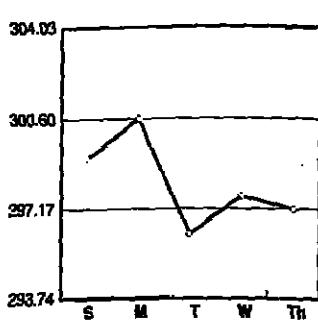
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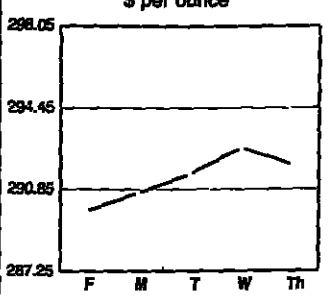
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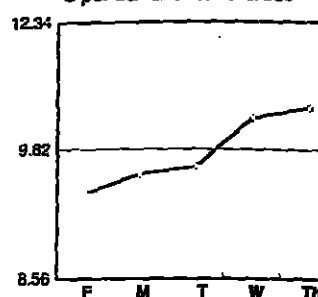
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BITS & BYTES

By NICKY BLACKBURN

DSS wins NIS 20m. driver enforcement deal

Driver Safety Systems (DSS) has been awarded a deal worth NIS 20 million to supply about 100 digital red light cameras to the Israeli police.

The company, which is based in Jerusalem, manufactures the RedEye 77, a digital camera used to photograph drivers who violate red light signals.

Operation of the cameras is the first part of a large-scale traffic law enforcement project, called Aleph-3, to be implemented over the next few years by the Israeli police.

The project is designed to reduce the number of car accidents and serious injuries in the country.

The first cameras are expected to be operational by the second quarter of 1999.

DSS's RedEye 77 is the first fully digital Red Light camera system in the world and allows operators to print and mail violation notices within 12 hours of the infraction.

Radcom launches new info website

Leading network test equipment manufacturer, Radcom has launched a new Internet site containing information about 250 data communications and telecommunications protocols.

The site, which is provided free by the Radcom Academy, provides a wealth of essential information for communications professionals.

"The site is being provided as a service by Radcom... and offers important, not easily come by information concerning today's ever changing data communications and telecommunications industry," said Danny Lauber, VP sales and marketing of Radcom.

The site, which is already up and running, contains an alphabetical directory of all major protocols with important frame structures and descriptions as well as links to additional information about specific protocols.

Six leading firms join VocalTec's iNOW! profile

Six companies are to join the upcoming iNOW! ("interoperability NOW!") Profile which was developed by Herzliya-based VocalTec Communications, Lucent Technologies and ITXC Corp.

The companies which have agreed to support iNOW!, a standards-based, multi-vendor initiative established to provide interoperability among IP telephony platforms, are Ascend, Cisco, Clarent, Dialogic, Natural Microsystems and Siemens.

They will work with the iNOW! Profile, to be published in January, to make their gateways and gatekeepers interoperable with each other's products and with those from Lucent and VocalTec.

M1 money supply down 1.8% in Dec.

By Jerusalem Post Staff

M1 money supply fell 1.8 percent last month to NIS 22.1 billion, the Bank of Israel said yesterday.

The drop in this measure of the sum of currency in public circulation, demand, deposit and travelers' checks, was the largest this year, following a 2.2% jump in October. In the course of the last 12 months M1 has increased 18.8%.

Economists said this, coupled with the 1.3% rise in the consumer price index (CPI) last month, means the central bank will not cut its key lending rate for January. That view was further backed by Bank of Israel sources who said the present political uncertainty and increasingly likely failure of the 1999 state budget being approved means the bank is highly likely to keep a tight reign on monetary policy.

The public's assets, meanwhile, totalled NIS 789.27b. at the end of October, of which 47.8% was

placed in CPI-linked investments, 11.6% in those which are foreign-currency linked, with an additional 15.7% tied up in the stock market, according to the central bank. Share ownership as a percentage of overall assets was at its lowest in more than a year, while foreign-linked investments were at their highest.

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Treasury: Political mayhem can push new budget to summer

By DAVID ZEV HARRIS

If the Knesset does not approve the 1999 state budget and accompanying budgetary arrangements bill in the next fortnight, the economy might well remain without a public expenditure package until August, state budget director David Milgrom warned yesterday.

Given that a general election seems likely to be held in April, with pollsters predicting a second round of voting in the prime ministerial race, Milgrom believes the Knesset will not be able to process the budget until August.

Without an approved budget, the govern-

ment can only use an inflation-adjusted 1998 pot, which would be divided into 12 equal portions and used on a month-by-month basis.

"The upshot of that is we're left with an extremely restricted budget, which does not take into account the increase in the size of the population, changes in the government's order of priorities, such as extra investments in infrastructure - things that simply don't appear in last year's budget," said Milgrom.

In practical terms, a variety of essentials have not been budgeted for, said Milgrom, and in order to fund them other projects will have to be dropped by the wayside.

Examples of additional funding require-

ments include:

- Finding resources to pay for extra teaching hours needed to cope with demographic growth.

- The transfer of funds to the Health Ministry for the expansion of the basket of health services.

Additionally, the budgetary arrangements bill, which has yet to pass its first reading, includes a technical section allowing for the transfer of unemployment benefit payments from one pot to another. Without this, Milgrom said, many people will be unable to receive payments.

Before any of these items are taken into account, the law stipulates that the govern-

ment must honor its obligations, which take into account debt and interest repayments and payments stemming from various other signed agreements.

Milgrom would not say to what extent, in percentage terms, the overall spending package would be restricted but said "it would be a budget that does not meet the reality of '99."

"There simply must be a budget, not only from the perspective of the ability to spend, but also in order to create a sense of stability, both for the domestic and overseas business communities."

This state of limbo would prevail until a budget is approved.



Harsh exchange

A senior trader (right) argues with his colleague during morning trading at the Tokyo Foreign Exchange yesterday, following the dollar's rise against the yen.

(AP)

Four years after Casablanca

Mideast development bank shuts down

By NICKY BLACKBURN

The Bank for Economic Cooperation and Development in the Middle East and North Africa closed its doors on Wednesday, even before its official opening.

The Cairo-based bank, which was designed to promote regional peace through economic cooperation, was closed due to "difficulties" in the Arab-Israeli peace process, according to transitional team member Lorenzo Savorelli.

Savorelli said that the bank also ran into problems because the US, a key shareholder, met a refusal on the part of Congress to release funds for the third year running.

The idea for the bank was first

mooted during the heady days of the 1994 Middle East & North Africa economic conference in Casablanca, and was formally set up at the Amman conference in 1995.

Since then the process of getting it off the ground has moved slowly. "Unfortunately it was obvious that it was not going to happen," said Naftali Mofet, the manager of the technologies department at the Peres Center for Peace.

"It was a very big and grandiose project, and perhaps that is why it failed. It's very disappointing. The region clearly needs huge amounts of money," he said.

Mofet added, however, that the center has now developed an alter-

native fund with the World Bank - which it hopes might go some way to replacing the bank.

The Peace Technology Fund has raised \$60 million, \$20 million each from the Israeli and Palestinian business communities, and another \$20 million from outside sources, to invest in joint schemes by Israeli and Palestinian businesses.

"We realized some time ago the way the wind was blowing concerning the bank and decided to move ahead on our own," said Mofet.

"The region has tremendous economic potential but we need an investment fund to realize it. A fund where Palestinian and Israeli money sits together is perhaps a

better model," he said.

The center hopes to open a similar fund with Jordan, called the Gateway Fund, in the months to come.

Koor completes Tadiran buyout

By DAN GERSTENFELD

Koor Industries yesterday announced that 92.47 percent of Tadiran's minority shareholders have agreed to sell the holding company their shares, thus allowing Koor to continue with its program to delist Israel's largest electronics manufacturer's American Depository Receipts from trading in the New York Stock Exchange.

Koor had to receive the approval of 90% of minority shareholders to delist the company. Israel's largest holding company said that following the buyout, it has acquired 51.08% of Tadiran's outstanding shares, reaching a holding of 97.5%. Koor paid \$36.375 per share.

It is widely believed that stockholders who were reluctant to sell their shares in Tadiran changed their minds recently.

The change took place following an Antitrust Authority announcement that its investigators recommended indicting senior executives at Tadiran and Telrad, which is also a subsidiary of Koor, for allegedly fixing the prices of switchboards sold to Bezeq.

Shareholders apparently fear that Tadiran's market value would be affected by the investigation and decided to sell their holdings.

Koor will now approach the remaining shareholders and offer to buy their shares for the same price.

Jonathan Kolber, Koor's vice chairman and CEO, said in a statement that the tender offer represents an important step in a strategic plan to simplify Koor's holding structure.

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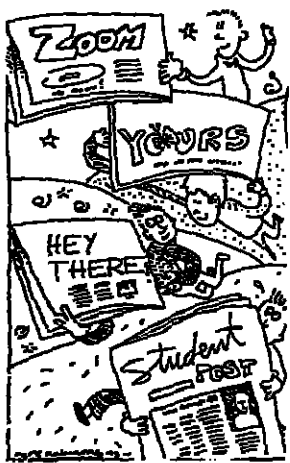
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	17.875	-0.625	
BA	47.6875	-1.5625	
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	80.1875	+1.75	
BL	17.75	0	
	81.125	+3.9125	
(F&F)			
	37.3125	-1.8125	
GR	24.1875	-1.1875	
	38.375	+0.5	
	26.9375	-0.25	
	43.3125	+1.5	
HL	70.4375	-1.25	
	276.75	-12.25	
HOUS	50.825	-0.5625	

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Ehud Barak's answer to Arthur Finkelstein



Apart from helping Clinton, Carville also advised Britain's Tony Blair (left) informally in his winning campaign; Barak is hoping the formula will work for him as well.

(Photos: Brian Hendler)

After ridiculing Binyamin Netanyahu for getting an American adviser in the 1996 election campaign, Labor has gone and hired one, too. Larry Derfner meets image genius James Carville

Political campaign wizard James Carville came to Israel to meet with his newest client, Ehud Barak, just when his most prominent charge, Bill Clinton, also happened to be in the country.

"A total coincidence - not that anybody's going to believe me," Carville said Tuesday night.

He noted that while he didn't speak with Clinton in Israel, the president would be calling him later that night, on his way home on Air Force One, to talk about his political troubles in Washington.

If Carville's visit had nothing to do with Clinton's timetable, it had everything to do with Barak's. The Labor leader saw a campaign about to start, and an election in May or June, so he wanted to get Carville out here in a hurry, said Aliza Goren, Barak's spokeswoman.

Very simply, Carville is Barak's answer to Arthur Finkelstein. The Labor Party has ridiculed Netanyahu ever since the 1996 campaign for hiring an American political Svengali to feed him his lines; now Labor has hired one of its own.

CARVILLE, however, has a greater reputation than Finkelstein in America, as well as in other parts of the world.

Ever since he managed the successful campaign of a little-known Southern governor against an incumbent president coming off a war victory, Carville has become known as the man who teaches liberals how to move toward the center and win.

The 1992 Clinton campaign's aggressive, up-with-people approach served as the model for Britain's Tony Blair and, most recently, for Germany's Gerhard Schröder, to unseat conservative prime ministers. Carville advised Blair informally in his campaign, and Carville's partner, Stanley Greenberg, did Blair's and

Schröder's campaign polling. "Just like people in Britain, Germany, and the US, people in Israel are tired of the rhetoric and inaction of the Right. They don't want to vote for something that's old and tired," Carville said.

Asked if the Labor Party thought Barak was the Israeli version of Clinton, Blair and Schröder - a social democrat whose time had come - Goren gave first the short answer, "Yes," then the long one: "Definitely."

But Carville is more than just a red-hot campaign consultant; he's become an American pop-culture fixture.

Born in the microscopic town of Carville, Louisiana (named for his grandfather, who was town postmaster), Carville, 54, goes on all the talk shows to give hell to the Republicans in his thick Southern accent. He has the most refreshing of images - the liberal redneck.

The titles of his three best-selling books say a lot about the way he works: *We're Right, They're Wrong: A Handbook for Spirited Progressives*; *All's Fair: Love, War and Running for President* (written with his wife, Mary Matlin, who was deputy campaign manager for Bush in 1992); and his most recent, *And the Horse He Rode In On: The People V. Kenneth Starr*.

IN the lobby of Tel Aviv's Dan Hotel, Carville stood out.

With his shaved head and prominent brow he looked like a Svengali, but the striped polo shirt, denim pants around his ankles and Heineken in his hand softened the impression.

He laughed a lot, and his demeanor seemed to say, "Hey, I'm here to learn."

Arriving here with Greenberg and their other partner, media man Robert Shrum, Carville freely admitted that he wasn't well-versed in Israeli politics. He'd met earlier in the day with a number of Labor MKs, but couldn't recall any of their names.

His first meeting with Barak was six months ago in New York.

"I kept looking at his hands, and wondering, you know, as a commander, how many people he'd come up behind," said the ex-marine.

He gushed about his new client, saying he had been so dazzled by Barak's reputation as an IDF soldier and general that it took him a while to get past the halo. Barak's reputation precedes him in the US, or at least among big-time Jewish Democrats, Carville said.

"Sitting with him is like sitting with [World War II legend] Audie Murphy," he said.

"He's a classical pianist, and they say he plays very well. He

has a Ph.D. in physics from Stanford. He's a remarkable man."

So much for the resumé.

How did Barak strike him? As handler of the world's most charismatic political leader, what kind of buzz did Carville get from Barak?

"One-on-one he's a very likable guy. He's not an aloof person, neither is he a slap-you-on-the-back type. He's warm, but businesslike," Carville replied.

And what about the leaden way Barak comes across on television?

"You could say he's not the biggest barrel of laughs I've ever seen in politics," Carville allowed.

STILL, the man nicknamed "the Ragin' Cajun" didn't want to focus on Barak's style, but on his political persona and the way he puts his messages across.

This is what Carville said he was hired to improve, to sharpen.

"What I do is so frighteningly simple that I'm almost scared to tell people what it is," he said.

"I find out what a candidate believes in, what's important to him, and then we focus on those things relentlessly, aggressively, energetically, with clarity of thought, direction and commitment."

Carville, who focused the 1992 Clinton campaign with his famous saying, "It's the economy, stupid," said he realized that Israel is not America or Western Europe - here security is still the overriding issue.

"Somebody told me that in Israel, 'being' comes before 'well-being,'" he said.

But, noting the high unemployment rate and slumping economy of the Netanyahu years, he added, "That doesn't mean we can't talk about maybe a little 'better-being.'"

First, though, Barak has to do a better job of playing his strongest card.

"He has to remind people of his military record, and make it absolutely clear that he is totally,



More than just a red-hot campaign consultant, Carville has become an American pop-culture fixture.

(Jonathan Bloom)

unequivocally committed to the security of the State of Israel," Carville said.

That's the positive message. There's also going to be a lot of emphasis on the negative message.

The premise is this: It's not that Netanyahu is a bad man, it is that he has led an inept government. Israel is a country looking for change; people are dissatisfied with this government.

There's no reason Israel has to continue down the road of division and ineptitude that has been the road taken by the present government."

Barak, Carville continued, will be saying Netanyahu hasn't been a leader, but instead has been led by the minority right-wing and religious factions in his coalition.

THE thing is to get Barak to say this more sharply and simply. Maybe the Labor Party leader's wide-ranging intelligence has been a bit of an obstacle, he said cheerily.

"The guy's full of ideas. He's got more ideas about more things than anybody I've ever met in my life," Carville gushed.

"I would just like to help him take that brilliant, wonderful mind and focus it on a few ideas, and express them a little more clearly."

And once Barak hones his message, he is going to repeat it over and over and over and over - literally ad nauseam, Carville hopes.

"It's only when a candidate's wife tells him, 'I'm sick of this, I don't think I can listen to you say that anymore,' that I know the message

is getting down to the people who don't pay attention to the news; who may be taking care of a sick parent and are too busy for politics."

"I want the [news junkies] to be sick and tired of hearing it - that's the great breaking point."

Told that Israeli news junkies may have already gotten sick and tired of hearing Barak's exhortations about "physical separation from the

Carville finds Barak 'remarkable,' but says about his TV persona: 'He's not the biggest barrel of laughs I've ever seen in politics'

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paigning, any kind of campaigning: "Why do you think people drink Coca-Cola? Because they see Coca-Cola logos, and Coca-Cola ads, and hear Coca-Cola commercials, and it's Coca-Cola here, Coca-Cola there, Coca-Cola everywhere."

Which led him into an appreciation of Netanyahu: "Let's give him credit: He can be very repetitive, he's a very good politician. I don't disparage his skills as a politician."

But the Ragin' Cajun stayed focused: "He's just the head of a failed government. His job isn't to give speeches. Sometimes I think we should elect one guy to run the country, and another guy to run his mouth."

NICE soundbite. Spoken for the 800th time, no doubt.

Better look out, Finkelstein. By the way, does he know Finkelstein?

"I do not," he said.

What does he think of his rival's work?

"Well, he was successful in the 1996 [Netanyahu] campaign, so some people probably think he's some kind of genius."

Others are hoping Carville is a bigger genius, and just as importable to Israel.

Walking out of the Dan lobby and heading for a car was Labor MK Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, who ran the party's successful 1992 campaign.

Asked what effect Clinton's old coach would have on Barak's chances, Ben-Eliezer replied: "He can only help."



Carville has that most refreshing of images - the liberal redneck.

(Jonathan Bloom)

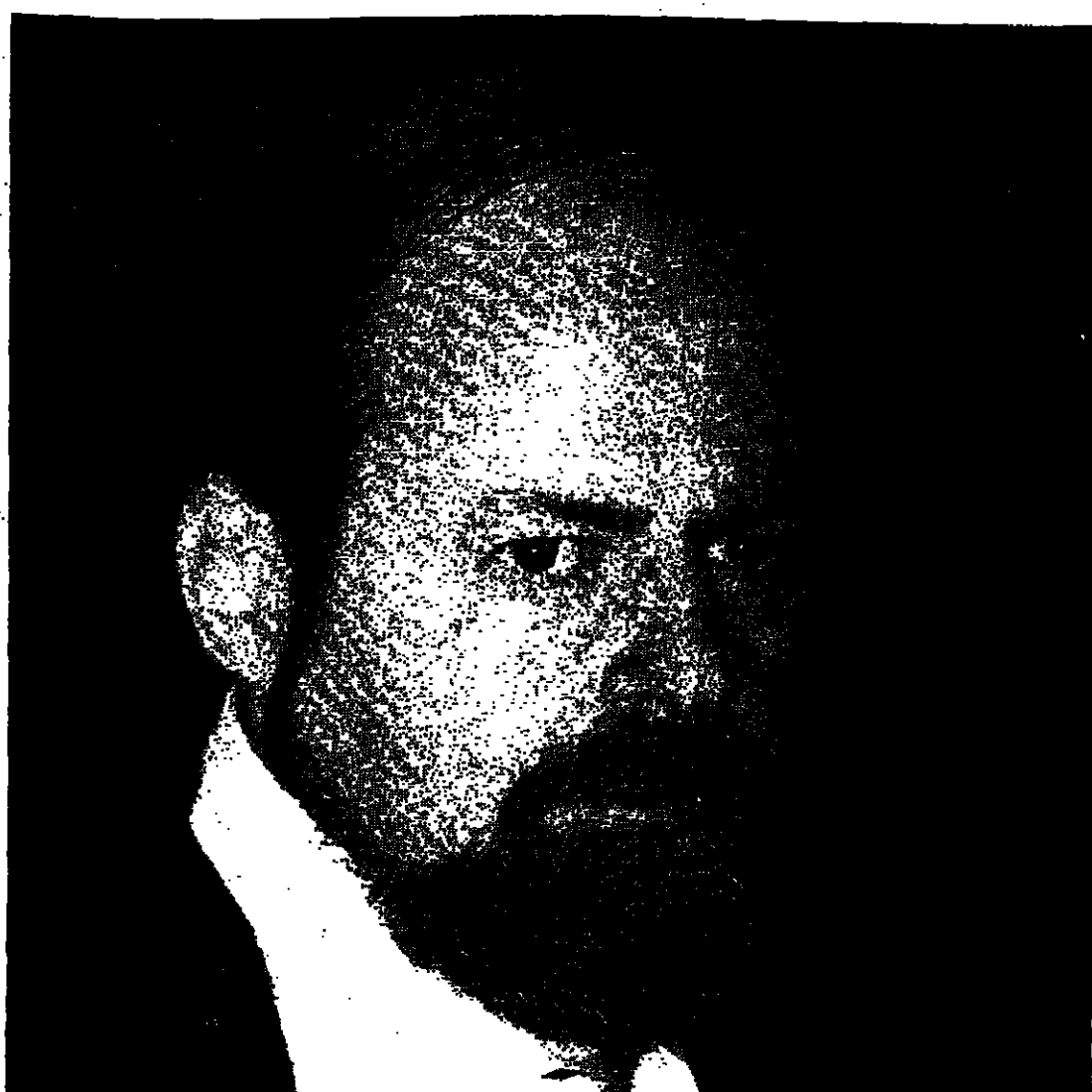
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Clinton shook her hand - did a tourist.

One man's stand against a future he deplores



Kleiner: 'Every child in the Palestinian Diaspora knows the covenant was not changed.'



A smiling Kleiner helps build a security fence around Jewish homes in Ras al-Amud in October. (Brian Hendler)

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu talked tough during the visit by US President Bill Clinton, who was sent home nearly empty-handed.

It began the moment Clinton touched down at Ben-Gurion Airport, and continued throughout his trip. At every opportunity the prime minister maintained his uncompromising tone, eyeing those MKs on the far Right who were threatening to topple the government if further territorial concessions were made to the Palestinians under the Wye River accord.

It may have been enough for some MKs who, though they voted against the accord, were not willing to risk any radical moves that could bring a less nationalistic government to power.

But for MK Michael Kleiner,

the fiery leader of the Land of Israel Front, nothing Netanyahu said was enough to repair the damage. Netanyahu has already proven that "he has broken all the boundaries," Kleiner declares.

According to Kleiner, it has become apparent that Netanyahu's supposedly tough stance toward the Palestinians now amounts to: "If they give, they will get; if they don't give, they will get anyhow."

"I have nothing personal against Netanyahu, and before Wye I had trust in him, more than others. When he said things, I believed him. However, I can't give him any more credit now," Kleiner says.

The MK's intransigence and potential to cast the vote needed to topple the government in a no-confidence motion on the early-elections bill scheduled for

MK Michael Kleiner, fiery head of the Land of Israel Front, is ready to cast the vote needed to topple the government in the no-confidence vote scheduled for Monday. Nina Gilbert reports

Monday has had its effect on Netanyahu.

Indeed, on Wednesday night, the prime minister issued his final ultimatum to the far Right - and also made an appeal to the Left - saying he would "no longer chase after anyone." He said he would himself initiate elections if the "necessary majority" was not found to support his peace process platform, which he intends to present to the Knesset on Monday.

Yesterday, Kleiner told *The*

Jerusalem Post from Germany that his stance against the government remained firm despite Netanyahu's declaration on Wednesday.

ON December 7, Netanyahu asked United Torah Judaism to turn the vote on the early elections bill into a motion of no-confidence, thereby gaining the government a two-week respite after hours of meetings to obtain the support needed from recalcitrant members of the front to topple the bill were unsuccessful.

Netanyahu's fate in a no-confidence motion rests in the hands of Kleiner. Ze'ev (Benny) Begin (Likud) and other discontented MKs such as Dan Meridor (Likud), who last week did not deny that he intended to vote against the government.

Meridor, who has plans to run on a centrist party ticket, has also called for new elections.

If the no-confidence motion is pulled, even wider support, including from Tsomet and The Third Way, is expected for the first reading of the opposition bills to dissolve the parliament and hold early elections.

POLITICAL observers question whether Kleiner would actually cast the deciding vote to topple the prime minister. But Kleiner declares he would have few

qualms about voting against the Netanyahu government in a confidence motion on Monday, despite the risk it entails.

"This is a very serious responsibility," he said, admitting that "I don't want to bring in a Labor government. There is an element of risk that [Labor Party leader Ehud] Barak will win [the elections] and be a little bit worse."

Kleiner points out, for example, that he did not buy into Barak's declaration that, as far as he was concerned, Beit El, Ofra and other settlements were "here to stay forever."

"I'm not naive," he says. However, Kleiner says, by making concessions contradictory to its platform, the Netanyahu government has made it easier for him to vote against it.

Netanyahu's actions "make it easier for people like me - since, suddenly, the choice is between two left-wing governments."

Kleiner hopes elections will bolster the national camp, resulting in a "firm standing on behalf of a right-wing government."

The Palestinian National Council's vote reaffirming the nullification of articles of its covenant hostile to Israel served to renew Kleiner's fervor this week.

"That was one of the greatest mistakes in politics," he stated. "The covenant was not changed."

every child in the Palestinian Diaspora knows the covenant was not changed." It can be changed only by a two-thirds vote of a meeting summoned [expressly] for changing the covenant.

According to Kleiner, the meeting in Gaza was just "a public meeting with a few members of the PNC."

What did Netanyahu get in return? Clinton's granting of worldwide recognition to an authority whose constitution specifies the destruction of Israel.

What happened in Gaza "only strengthened" Kleiner's decision to vote against Netanyahu, he says.

Netanyahu's actions 'make it easier for people like me, since suddenly the choice is between two left-wing governments'

"If concessions are so great, it's better to take a chance, especially if Netanyahu is establishing the Palestinian state," he says, adding, "I am not willing to believe Netanyahu's promises anymore."

IN the upcoming vote, Kleiner says he is not depending on the support of the National Religious Party MKs active in the front, including Zvi Hendel and Hanan Porat, against Netanyahu.

"I can understand them... as long as there is a slight hope that Bibi will stop the concessions," he says.

In meetings with the prime minister at the end of the week, Hendel and Porat said they were

leaving their options open, depending on whether there was another withdrawal.

Kleiner predicts that the NRP will join his efforts if Netanyahu transfers another 5 percent of territory to the Palestinians.

And, he says, "I am sure Benny Begin and Moledet will vote with me on Monday." The other MKs "will join me later."

DESPITE his official status as a member of the Gesher faction, which is viewed as more socially and politically moderate, Kleiner emphasizes that no mistake should be made about his views on the peace process.

"I voted against the Camp David Accords in the Herut central committee," he notes proudly.

In September, Kleiner froze all his parliamentary activities on behalf of Gesher. The establishment of the Gesher faction, he notes, had nothing to do with political issues. Kleiner's membership in Gesher, he says, resulted from his long-term ties to the David Levy camp in the Likud.

He says he joined the government with Gesher because he could live with the joint Likud-Tsomet-Gesher platform.

But since then, he says, "Levy and Netanyahu have made a U-turn."

Kleiner, a resident of Tel Aviv, came out as the leader of the Land of Israel Front, following the Hebron Accord, when 17 MKs voted against and became dubbed "Force 17," after Arafat's bodyguard unit.

Other MKs active in the group include Moledet MKs Rehavam Ze'evi and Benny Elon, the NRP's Hendel, Porat, and Nissan Slomiansky, and the Likud's Begin, Uzi Landau, and Tsomet's Moshe Peled.

If elections are held, Kleiner says he is planning to establish a new party.

"There is a hole in the right-wing map," he says. "I believe that the 19 members of the Land of Israel Front and their supporters in the public should form a new party to replace the Likud." (Nineteen MKs voted against the Wye accord last month.)

The Likud, he says, betrayed its ideology by accepting the Hebron and Wye agreements. "I believe that we should establish a new Likud, a new Herut," Kleiner says.

According to Kleiner, 25% of the Jewish public in Israel is opposed to the line of Oslo and Wye. "I am sure this will increase when they see how bad the agreements are," he adds.

Kleiner says he could live with elections being held in the summer, as long as no more concessions are made to the Palestinians until then.

"Shimon Peres didn't move forward on Hebron withdrawal and put the peace process on hold until the May 1996 elections," he notes.

Asked if he would be able to live with the fact that his actions could bring the Labor Party to power, Kleiner says: "I don't want this to happen, but I will do everything in the elections to ensure that it won't happen. It could happen anyhow in the elections scheduled for 2000."

What Kleiner says he fears more is Netanyahu's surviving a vote Monday on early elections; then it would be another six months before MKs could introduce another early-elections initiative.

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Amid haredi dreams of changing society's face, 'secularism' rules the day

Ironically, while the haredim have amassed enough power to bring down the government, they haven't been able to push religious legislation through the Knesset. **Herb Keinon reports**

In three successive weeks, the courts have handed down precedent-setting rulings that contain the seeds for fundamental change in the way the country looks and feels.

The first was the November decision by the High Court of Justice to force the religious councils in Jerusalem and Kiryat Tivon to seat representatives of the Reform and Conservative movements, a small victory by these movements in their struggle to gain recognition and legitimacy in the eyes of the state.

The second decision came two weeks ago, when the Jerusalem Labor Court ruled that kibbutz shopping centers could remain open to the public on Shabbat. This ruling drastically changed a situation in which only selected places of "cultural activity" such as theaters and cinemas were permitted to operate on Shabbat. An appeal on this is inevitable.

The third and most significant decision was last week's High Court of Justice ruling rendering "illegal" the current situation where yeshiva students receive wholesale draft deferments. The court gave the Knesset a year to draw up legislation determining whether and how many yeshiva students can continue to receive deferments.

Relating to these rulings, the Agudat Yisrael daily *Hamodia* wrote earlier this month, "It is difficult to rid oneself of the feeling that there are people in Israel's legal system, from the Supreme Court down to the labor courts, who have placed themselves in the service of the state's anti-religious sectors and are leading the people in Zion to a split. These people, one after the other, are adopting every anti-religious petition that reaches their desks."

The paper's angry reaction was expected. In fact, it was mild compared to the reaction in another haredi daily, *Degel Har Torah's Yated Ne'eman*. Last year, after Supreme Court President Aharon Barak overturned then transportation minister Yitzhak Levy's decision to close Jerusalem's Rehov Bar-Ilan to traffic during Shabbat and festival prayer times, the paper

thundered: "The religious and Orthodox public has a dangerous enemy... called Aharon Barak."

EVERY time the court hands down a ruling that deals with religious issues, such editorials appear in the haredi dailies. This has meant a spate of angry editorials, since Barak - the champion of "judicial activism" - takes the courts, with increasing frequency, where Israeli judges have hesitated to go before: into the sticky realm of synagogue-state relations.

In addition to the editorials, these types of rulings always lead the religious parties to promise laws that will supersede the court action, the so-called "Supreme Court bypass laws."

Ironically, however, despite the religious parties' unprecedented representation in the Knesset, they have been unable to get key "Supreme Court bypass laws" off the ground.

Recent haredi political power has not translated into the power to change the character of the state. Financial benefits for haredi constituents and institutions, resoundingly yes; power to enact laws that would change the feel of the state, definitely not.

If anything, recent court cases have shown that the courts are steering the country in the opposite direction of where the haredim would like to see it go, with the haredi parties able to do very little about it.

IT HAS, indeed, been more difficult for the religious parties to enact Supreme Court bypass laws than it has for at least one of the parties, the National Religious Party, to get money for bypass roads to the settlements in the territories.

With one glaring exception: the 1994 Frozen Meat Law that banned, except in certain circumstances, the import of nonkosher meat, and which effectively overturned a Supreme Court ruling that said the opposite.

What is striking about this law is that it was passed not during the current government's tenure, when the religious parties have 23 seats, but when there was only one religious party in the govern-

ment - Shas - with six MKs and one cabinet seat.

During the current Knesset the parties have been unable to pass any "bypass laws." Attempts to pass the controversial Conversion Bill, which would have stipulated that in Israel only Orthodox conversions are acceptable, never made any headway. This bill would have preempted an inevitable Supreme Court ruling on Reform and Conservative conversions.

Likewise, the Religious Council bill, stipulating that members of the religious councils pledge allegiance to the chief rabbi and the *Shulhan Aruch* (Code of Jewish Law), never made it to the floor because the religious parties realized they did not have the necessary votes to

see the bill through. Shas MK David Tal attributed this to the weakness of the coalition.

'We don't have the strength to influence the character of the state'

- Shas MK David Tal

"The coalition is very weak; it doesn't work," he said. "The Left could [usher through these types of laws]. They could be against

you in their world view, but when you are in the coalition, and they say yes to something, it means yes."

Tal noted the irony that while Shas has had the power for the last two-and-a-half years to bring down the government, it hasn't succeeded in pushing religious legislation through the Knesset.

"We can topple the government, but we cannot pass religious legislation because in the coalition we can't find partners to support these laws," he said. "Unfortunately we don't have the strength to influence the character of the state."

"Only the Left can legislate religious laws," said NRP MK Yigal Bibi, deputy religious affairs minister, in a play on the well-worn slogan, "only the

Right can bring peace." "The Left has more discipline; the public feels that if they are the ones supporting the bill, it is

'Only the Left can legislate religious laws'

- NRP MK Yigal Bibi

okay. When the Left pushes this kind of legislation, there is much less opposition."

NETANYAHU caused a furor in July when he suggested passing legislation which would prevent the court from intervening in matters concerning religious outlook and criticized Aharon Barak for being more concerned with "judicial activism" than dealing with the overloaded work of the courts.

In a remark that caused much consternation, he said: "If the Supreme Court continues not to abide by the law, we will have to

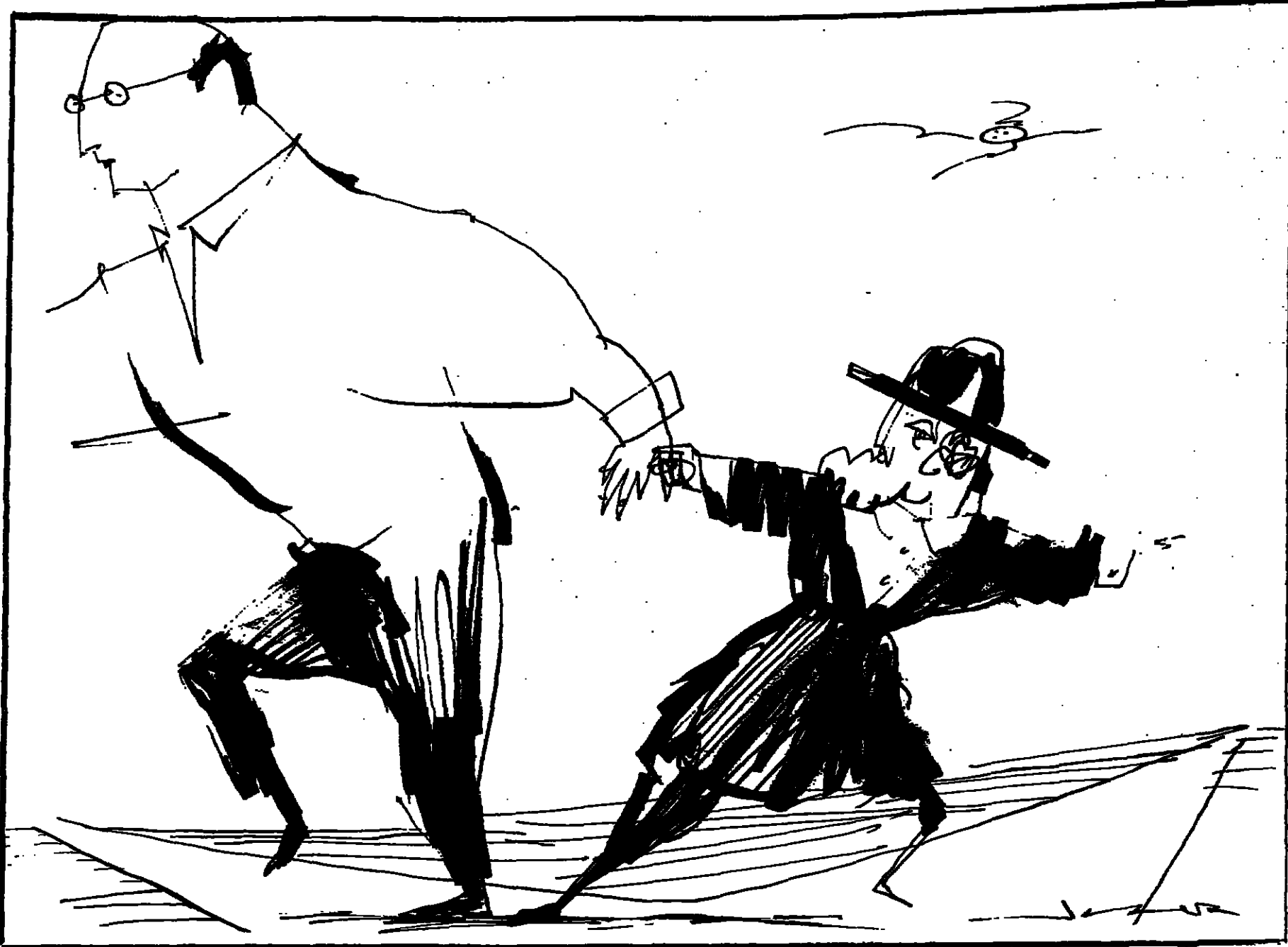
pass a law that the Supreme Court must judge according to the law."

Although couching his criticism this time around in more diplomatic language, Netanyahu said that he felt the court was grossly overextending its reach, and, as a result, losing the confidence and trust of the religious public - and more and more of the secular public as well.

Claude Klein, a law professor at the Hebrew University and an expert in constitutional law, disagreed with the assessment. He agreed that the court had lost the confidence of the haredim, but called it an overstatement to say it had lost the faith of the entire religious population, or large parts of the secular public.

"If the court loses the confidence of all of society, or even a large part of it, that's problematic," he said. "But that is not the case now."

"The haredi population comprises only eight to 10 percent of the entire population - they just make a great deal of noise when decisions go against them."



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SADDAM

Continued from Page 1

The sources point to the fact that Hussein has divided his country into four districts, headed by some of his most loyal and brutal lieutenants, as a sign he is afraid of losing control.

"Whenever he delegates authority it's scary," said one senior security source.

The IDF assessment is that any American intention to kill Saddam is problematic since he has created an effective personal defense system. But should he be cut off, each of the districts is instructed to operate independently.

Furthermore, Saddam's decision to divide the country into four regions is an attempt to head off any attempts to move against him internally, the sources said.

He has placed as governors some of his most ruthless loyalists. Head of the southern district, for example, is Ali Hassan Majid, who has brutally put down any attempts by the Shi'ites to raise their heads and move against Saddam.

Majid was the man behind the forceful transfer of civilians from Kuwait after Iraq occupied it in 1990.

"These people are the most brutal

loyalists who are ready to do anything for Saddam to survive," a source said.

While the US has refrained from saying they are personally targeting Saddam, the Iraqi leader is aware that this is the long term American intention, and has prepared for it.

"Our assessment is that Saddam is now dealing with his survival. Hitting him will be very, very hard," the source continued.

He added that Israel believes the attack on Iraq has left "many dozens of casualties." But this would not be a factor in determining whether or not the attack succeeded or failed.

The Americans have declared that the goal of the attack is to get Saddam back to cooperating with UN weapons inspectors, and that it wasn't an act of punishment. But should Saddam survive and win the backing of the Arab world and Russia, then the US attack would be considered a failure.

Saddam's two main goals remain the preservation of his weapons of mass destruction and the lifting of sanctions.

If sanctions are lifted, the security source warned, Iraq could quickly rebuild its massive arsenal of chemical and biological weapons, as well as surface-to-surface missiles capable of reaching Israel.

COLUMN 1

Continued from Page 7

Let's phrase it in a myopic Republican way: If Clinton does not reject the Butler Report, he is weak and paralyzed by the impeachment vote. If he does react, he is trying to divert attention from the... yadda yadda.

Heads, I win; tails, you wag the dog.

"I am prepared to place 30 years of public service on the line," said Cohen, an honorable voice in the Republican wilderness. "The only factor that was important in this decision is what was in the American people's best interest. There were no other factors."

Ah, but take Paul Weyrich, a prominent conservative activist. Like many of the canine persuasion, he believes Clinton's decision to bomb Iraq "is more of an impeachable offense than anything he is being charged with in Congress."

Do these people ever listen to themselves? Is Saddam now some Republican or unimpeachable character when stood beside the evil, dangerous threat-to-the-world Clinton? Um, yeah: I guess.

SETTLERS

Continued from Page 1

He stressed that the elections must take place before May since the Palestinians might unilaterally declare independence on May 4.

Some of his interlocutors, however, warned that it may not be enough to plan only for one date. The likelihood of more than two prime ministerial candidates is sure to result in a run-off two weeks after the first round. This second voting day must also be scheduled before May 4, Netanyahu was told.

This would seem to rule out the April 27 date mooted by some. The Likud might now press for March 18.

Aware that he may be challenged from within the Likud for the party's prime ministerial nomination, Netanyahu appealed for unity in the ranks in his address to the Likud secretariat.

Labor Party chairman Ehud Barak, at a press conference yesterday, appeared to kick off his campaign with a speech that repeatedly characterized Netanyahu and his government as extremists.

This, say Labor insiders, will be Barak's main campaign mantra.

"We have now heard Netanyahu admit that his extremist government has failed. Israel cannot afford a government wholly preoccupied by its own survival and by capitulation to the most extreme elements in the country," Barak said.

"Netanyahu has no policy but surrendering to extremist groups to win yet another day in office." He promised the voters that his government "will work for all, not just extremists. It will stress education over settlements. It will allocate funds to the unemployed instead of to yeshiva students."

Barak refused to elaborate on the possibility that former chief of General Staff Amnon Lipkin-Shahak would throw his hat into the ring. His sole comment was: "We will fight him if we have to, but if he joins us, we will embrace him."

Labor sources report that he is exerting great pressure on MK Haim Ramon not to leave the party and join the projected new centrist party, on whose ticket Shahak may seek the premiership.

Dry Bones



GRAPEVINE

By GREER FAY CASHMAN

Although they've been in correspondence over the years, US President Bill Clinton and his childhood friend from Hope, Arkansas, the Reverend Dr. John F. Anthony, haven't had much chance to talk to each other. In fact they hadn't spoken since 1994. But despite Clinton's busy schedule they made up for lost time when Clinton came to Jerusalem this week.

Anthony, who has lived in the capital for the past 25 years and is the pastor at the Baptist Church, had sent a fax to the White House inviting Clinton to attend Sunday services.

Clinton didn't have time to go to church - but he did want to meet his old friend. The upshot: Anthony was at Ben-Gurion Airport on Saturday night to greet the president and show him a photograph from their kindergarten days. Anthony and his wife, Connie, were also at Binyanei Ha'uma on Sunday night, and later at the state dinner at the

momentary double take - then quickly looked the other way. Seconds later, security men whisked him away.

Also at Binyanei Ha'uma was Yoni Dotan, son of comedian Dudu Dotan, who while recovering from cancer was sent to America by the Make a Wish Organization to meet with President Clinton. They made a lasting impression on each other, and Yoni was in Jerusalem at Clinton's request.

IT doesn't matter who you are - if you haven't got the right ID, you're in *shnuck*. According to a *Yedioth Aharanit* report,

Foreign Ministry Director-General Eytan Bentsur almost missed the meeting at the Hilton between Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon and US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

Bentsur arrived at the Hilton parking lot minus his special tag. Security officials refused to let him enter the hotel, and would not yield to either fuming or pleading. Bentsur was beside himself. But fortunately, salvation was close at hand. Someone in authority identified him and he was able to join Sharon - several minutes late.

HAD President Clinton stayed at the Tel Aviv Hilton instead of at the Jerusalem Hilton, he might have enjoyed the hotel's new Japanese cuisine. The hotel opened its new sushi restaurant last week, a kosher branch of Yakimono, run by Avi Cohen and serviced by Japanese chefs and waitresses. Cohen opened his first Yakimono restaurant at the port of Tel Aviv seven years ago, and intends to open other branches at the Jerusalem and Eilat Hiltons.

HONORED by the European International Business Academy, which named him international Executive of the Year, Dov Lautman, chairman of the board of Delta Textile Industries, responded to praise by Professor Dov Te'eni, director of Bar-Ilan University's Graduate School of Business by describing his enterprise as "the largest *shmatte* company in Israel." Yet at the same time, he noted, it is a very global company. Lautman's definition of global: "We take Egyptian cotton, spin it in



Lautman: global Delta

Turkey, bring the yarn to Israel, where it is knitted and dyed, then take it to Jordan for cutting and sewing. Then we ship it to New York under the Ralph Lauren label, and sell it to Japanese tourists."

PROTECT

Continued from Page 1

He added that while the US would be "sensitive" to Islam's upcoming holy month of Ramadan, it could not promise that US attacks would necessarily stop at that time.

"I can assure you that if Saddam takes any retaliatory steps, we will not hesitate and hit him with whatever we've got, and whenever," he said.

In Washington, Defense Secretary William Cohen noted: "We began this operation prior to Ramadan. Our goal is to complete it as soon as we can. We are sensitive to the Ramadan period, and that's all I care to say about that."

The US said the first night of attacks had reduced to rubble important military headquarters buildings in the Baghdad area. More than 70 US warplanes and more than 200 Tomahawk cruise missiles hit over 50 targets in the first wave of Operation Desert Fox on Wednesday night, an operation ordered by Clinton after the UN said Iraq was obstructing weapons inspectors.

The second wave began in mid-morning Washington time, after night had fallen in Iraq, defense officials said. B-52 bombers took off from the Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia armed with air-

launched cruise missiles, they added.

"Additional strike operations are under way even as we speak," Gen. Henry Shelton, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told a briefing at about 1 p.m. Washington time. "Today's strikes will include land-based aircraft, including the British Tornados, as well as additional Navy and Marine strike sorties."

British military spokesmen in London and Kuwait later said all 12 planes in the first wave of British attacks had returned safely, and further night-time raids were in progress.

Anti-aircraft batteries in Baghdad fired into the sky and at least 13 huge explosions Baghdad around 10 last night. Journalists said some of the strikes appeared to be close to the center of the city.

Clinton rejected criticism that the timing of the initial strikes was designed to deflect the Republican drive to impeach him, saying the attack was "absolutely the right thing to do."

The targets on Wednesday night included Iraq's air defense system, its command-and-control system, airfields, and facilities associated with Iraq's programs to make weapons of mass destruction, Shelton said.

Sen. John Warner, who had a private briefing with Defense Secretary Cohen, said the raids had

caused "substantial degradation" to the command-and-control system.

"Our early assessment... shows that our forces are performing well. There have been no American casualties and we are achieving good coverage of our targets," added Cohen.

Shelton, in a presentation reminiscent of those the US military gave during the Gulf War in 1991, gave two dramatic examples of what the air raids had achieved. He showed before and after photographs of two buildings at the Directorate of Military Intelligence headquarters in Baghdad and of an elite Republican Guard barracks at Abu Ghreib, on the outskirts of the city.

"Where you don't see anything but rubble is what formerly was this building," he said.

At Abu Ghreib the bombing leveled a Republican Guard's headquarters building and destroyed four out of five barracks buildings, according to the photographs.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammed Saeed Sahaf told a news conference the attack hit Baghdad's security police and military intelligence headquarters and had caused heavy civilian casualties.

"We have no way of knowing whether or not the barracks were occupied at the time," Shelton said. "We hit the barracks sometime

between 1 a.m. and 4:30 a.m. Baghdad time. You would assume that with the advance notice they got, probably some of the troops had left their barracks."

Doctors at one Baghdad hospital reported five people killed and 30 wounded, many suffering from burns and shrapnel wounds.

Cohen and Shelton declined to say how long the military operation would last, but defense officials said it would take several days to work through the target list.

Cohen expanded on the US long-term strategy, saying the ideal outcome would be for Saddam Hussein to let back the arms inspectors from the UN Special Commission and cooperate with them.

"It would be my hope that following this operation, that Saddam Hussein would see the wisdom of finally complying by allowing UNSCOM to return and do its job," he said.

But, failing that, the US would pursue a strategy of military and economic containment, he said.

This would mean keeping US forces on watch, ready to attack if Washington saw signs that Iraq was making weapons of mass destruction or threatening its neighbors, he said.

Saddam Hussein himself was not on Wednesday's target list and the US is not tracking him, Shelton added.

Clinton, speaking at the White House, said: "Our mission is clear, to destroy his capability to develop and to use weapons of mass

destruction. I believe we have achieved that mission."

He repeatedly insisted he ordered the air strikes without regard to the looming impeachment vote in the House of Representatives.

"What I did was the right thing for the country," Clinton said.

Asked if he was concerned that Saddam might try to invade Kuwait in retaliation, Clinton replied: "I think that surely he knows what a disastrous mistake that would be."

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said she was encouraged by the response of Arab leaders to the strikes, but regretted Russia's vehement opposition to the raids.

"In my calls to the Arab leaders I found a full understanding as to why we have undertaken military action. Most expressed the view that Saddam Hussein is entirely responsible for the military strike now under way," Albright told a news briefing.

She said Arab leaders understood Washington had given diplomacy every chance to work before the attacks began.

"They know we have resorted to this action because Saddam Hussein left us no other choice. Like us, they are concerned for the welfare of the Iraqi people," she said. "They [Arab leaders] know that we are exercising every effort to avoid civilian casualties in this operation. There have been a few critical public comments, but the reaction so far serves to underscore how isolated Saddam Hussein is in the Arab world."

ANALYSIS

Continued from Page 2

Baram stressed that one of the keys to understanding Saddam was that the Iraqi President, after 19 years in power, was a survivor with an obsessive desire to remain in control.

For these reasons, he said there was a low probability of retaliatory Iraqi missile strikes with non-conventional warheads on Israel, unless Saddam thought he might gain something and had nothing else to lose.

"If he is pushed to the brink there is a possibility, but I don't think that will happen now and even if it does Saddam might not have time to recognize the fact that he is on the brink," said Baram.

"He probably has around 20

operational missiles, all of which also have non-conventional chemical and biological warheads, and a handful of mobile launchers. One of these falling on Tel Aviv, for instance, would cause meaningful damage."

"The chances of this happening, in my opinion, are very low, although my advice would be to closely monitor what Saddam and his generals are saying."

"As long as they are not threatening to use these weapons, the chances are that they won't - and they are only likely to make such threats in an attempt to stop the US attacks. To use them without any threat would make less sense, unless Saddam suddenly decides to commit mass suicide - and up to now he has shown no signs of being suicidal," Baram added.

IDF

Continued from Page 2

Maj.-Gen. Dan Halutz, deputy director of General Staff Branch Operations, said the IDF is preparing for an eventuality in which Israel may be drawn into the conflict. "The public is called on to update their protection kits during the day. I also call on those who have kits which have expired or they have outgrown to return them. To complete the protection package, people asked to equip themselves with the items needed including plastic and tape and minimal first-aid equipment," Halutz

said. As of last night, some 20,000 people telephoned the Home Front Command's hotline for information and another 6,400 visited the centers to update their kits.

"We have to act like a resident in a neighborhood when there is an event which is not exactly in his yard, but in his neighborhood. He has to organize himself, prepare, and mainly check his surroundings. This is what we are doing," said IDF Spokesman Brig.-Gen. Oded Ben-Ami. The following information numbers have been set up by the Home Front Command: English - 055-133-777, and the nationwide information number is 12-55-111 (no area code needed).

Fisher: candle trouble

Hilton hosted by Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu. They even managed to get together briefly with the Clintons to trade reminiscences.

Anthony is encouraging people to "pray for the president," he told *The Jerusalem Post*. "I don't want him to be impeached. He doesn't deserve it. It's like King David," he summed up. "He made a mistake, but he was a good king. President Clinton made a mistake, but he's a good president."

ANTHONY was not the only one urging the public to pray for the president. Israel Radio's Yossi Siyas, in the pre-dawn hours after Clinton's landing, asked listeners to say a prayer for Clinton when they lit their Hanukkah candles.

TALKING of Hanukkah, was there some ill omen in the *shamash* candle which Netanyahu was unable to put in place in the Hilton's magnificent silver menorah? Both Clinton and singer Dado Fisher tried to assist, but the candle leaned precariously like a waxen Tower of Pisa.

DID anyone notice, amongst the enthusiastic youngsters crowded at Binyanei Ha'uma, a dark-haired young woman in a cream-colored beret who bore a striking resemblance to Monica Lewinsky? At the end of the function, she desperately pushed through the throng trying to shake hands with the president. She almost missed him, succeeding at only the last moment. Clinton shook her hand - did a

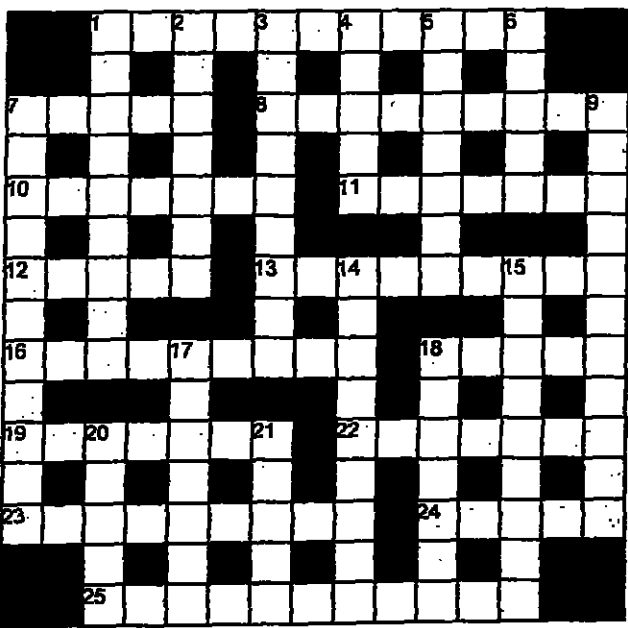
CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 1 Flying club for fashionable elite? (4,7)
- 7 Huge Spanish aunt demands old Roman port (5)
- 8 Smart golfers put their clubs there (2,3,4)
- 10 National resources require careful management (7)
- 11 Listen to a small number cheer (7)
- 12 Major conqueror heard the trumpet-call (5)
- 13 Where Catholics congregate as a whole (2,3,4)
- 16 Plenty of businessmen negotiate for it (1,4,4)
- 18 Shoot southern puritan (5)
- 19 Passes on one thousand components (7)

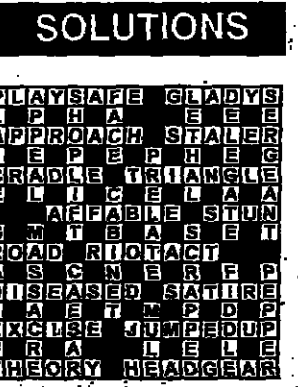
DOWN

- 22 Ham served to a large number in public (7)
- 23 Final destination for solemn CID men (9)
- 24 Endeavoured to be heard in court (5)
- 25 Model Eton prefect performed faultlessly (4,7)
- 1 Tricky situation for the vegetarian lobby? (3,6)
- 2 Girl disheartened over love-affair needs excitement (7)
- 3 Neil's upset about right-wing plot (5-4)
- 4 Understand there's a snag (5)



SOLUTIONS

- 5 Tale Eve concocted to offer promotion (7)
- 6 It's used in every eastern bakery (5)
- 7 High-handed as far as attitude is concerned (11)
- 9 Presbyopic clairvoyant (4,7)
- 14 Extravagant demand for Corinthian column, maybe (4,5)
- 15 It is a real catastrophe for high-drier (9)
- 17 The German travelled to see Yorkshire banker (7)
- 18 A little confectionery, dearest? (7)
- 20 Simple scheme to involve Israeli leader (5)
- 21 Quick-witted, but sly (6)



Yesterday's Quick Solution
ACROSS: 1 Fourth, 4 Writs, 8 Indus, 9 Parting, 10 Elegant, 11 Apos, 12 Sap, 14 Oslo, 15 Hope, 16 Eye, 21 Taps, 22 Fanciful, 23 Politic, 24 Sheba, 27 Enana, 28 Feeble, DOWN: 1 Felled, 2 Undress, 3 Testator, 4 Wire, 5 Icing, 6 Engage, 7 Spain, 13 Pharoah, 16 Prowler, 17 Stamp, 19 Ketch, 20 Urbane, 22 Falma, 24 Sky.

QUICK CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 1 Ebb and flow (4)
- 3 Small houses (8)
- 9 Venomous snake (5)
- 10 Musical flourish (7)
- 11 Odd (8)
- 13 Trip (9)
- 14 Summer shoe (6)
- 16 N Ireland (6)
- 18 Pleasure-seeker (9)
- 20 Fish eggs (8)
- 22 Rushing (7)
- 23 Distinctive manner (5)
- 25 Class (8)
- 26 Sanction (4)

DOWN

- 1 Indonesian island (5)
- 2 Poorly lit (3)
- 4 Business-room (6)
- 5 Threadlike stem (7)
- 6 Arena fighter (9)
- 7 More severe (7)
- 8 Yawn (4)
- 12 Beggar (9)
- 14 Religious doubter (7)
- 15 Diverting (7)
- 17 Church official (8)
- 19 Pry (4)
- 21 Funeral poem (5)
- 24 Tibetan ox (3)

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EUROPE WEATHER TODAY

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ISRAEL CITIES

City	Today	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Ariel	14/57	16/61	18/64	19/67
Beersheva	16/61	18/64	20/67	21/70
Dead Sea	10/58	12/61	14/64	15/67
Eilat	20/68	22/71	24/74	25/77
Haifa	17/61	19/64	21/67	22/70
Jerusalem	15/59	17/62	19/65	20/68
Katseh	16/60	18/63	20/66	21/69
Netanya	17/62	19/65	21/68	22/71
Tel Aviv	18/64	20/67	22/70	23/73
Tiberias	18/64	20/67	22/70	23/73

Weather (W): sunny, partly cloudy, cloudy, showers, thunderstorms, rain, snow, fog, ice, snow, ice.

INTERNATIONAL CITIES

City	Today	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Alexandria	18/24	20/27	22/30	23/33
Bahia	14/57	16/60	18/63	19/66
Buenos Aires	18/24	20/27	22/30	23/33
Calcutta	18/24	20/27	22/30	23/33
Chicago	18/24	20/27	22/30	23/33
Frankfurt	18/24	20/27	22/30	23/33
Hong Kong	18/24	20/27	22/30	23/33
London	18/24	20/27	22/30	23/33
Los Angeles	18/24	20/27	22/30	23/33
Madrid	18/24	20/27	22/30	23/33
Mexico City	18/24	20/27	22/30	23/33
Moscow	18/24	20/27	22/30	23/33
New York	18/24	20/27	22/30	23/33
Paris	18/24	20/27	22/30	23/33
Rangoon	18/24	20/27	22/30	23/33
Rio de Janeiro	18/24	20/27	22/30	23/33
Rome	18/24	20/27	22/30	23/33
Sydney	18/24	20/27	22/30	23/33
Tokyo	18/24	20/27	22/30	23/33
Toronto	18/24	20/27	22/30	23/33
Vancouver	18/24	20/27	22/30	23/33
Washington	18/24	20/27	22/30	23/33
Zurich	18/24	20/27	22/30	23/33

NORTH AMERICA WEATHER TODAY

Youth clubs: A great way to help the poor

On Tuesday, we went to the Neveh Ya'acov youth club for new immigrants from the former Soviet Union to unveil the plaque honoring the donation from the estate of the late Mrs. Sophie I. Lourie of Philadelphia. Thanks to that generous donation, we were able to furnish the club house for this new Jerusalem community.

We bought a video, TV, video camera, computer, furniture, toys and games.

The Neveh Ya'acov club is a center for new immigrants, a place where they can enjoy a supportive atmosphere. This is just one of the ways in which we use your donations.

We have many, many more appeals for assistance from other youth clubs and community centers. We look to you, our generous readers to help us fulfill this great need.

Please rush your checks to: The Jerusalem Post Funds, P.O. Box 81, 91000 Jerusalem.

We (Illie Feldman and Judy Amnoff) can be reached by telephone at (02) 537-6528 if you wish to make a VISA credit card donation or if you have any queries.

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NIS 200 In memory of Mark Haimson - E. Sultan.

NIS 180 The living-room corner may be empty but there is a corner in our Holy Land that is forever Dora - Faith and Stephen.

NIS 160 H. Witlin, Dr. and Mrs. Benes. In honor of our children, Ari, Michael and Meir - Leah and Arthur Shavit.

NIS 108 In memory of our beloved parents, Freda and Joseph Silberschutz, and Miriam and Jacob Clark - Harry and Sallie Shaw - Barbara Roche. Anon. - J'em. Mrs. Helen Goldshteyn.

NIS 50 In honor of our dear parents' and grandparents' golden wedding, Irene and Julius Simpson - Michelle, Stephen, Rachel and Danny Simpson. In memory of our dear husband and father Hans Gutman - Genia, Mickey

and Danny, R. Wiseman.

NIS 36 In memory of Beverlee Black - Ruth and Michael.

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\$300 William H. Brandt, Gladstone, OR.

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\$15 In honor of our grandchildren David, Emily, Marc, Stephen and Adam Sonenshine. Mr. and Mrs. A. Weitzweig, Skokie, IL.

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NIS 275 J. Gubins-Hart.

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\$80 From the Mechina 2 class at the Westchester Jewish Center, Mamaroneck, NY: Matthew B., Michael G., Scott M., Elliot R., Samara R., Alexandra R., Jordan S., Hannah S., Debra S., Mitchell S., Gregory S., Carolyn Z., David A., Gabi S., David G., Jordan G., Gabi K., Jade M., Scott S., Michael S., Matthew W., Douglas W., Elizabeth W., Gregory S. and Morah Sharon.

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Sunday, December 20 at 6 p.m.
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Beckham beats the blues

LONDON (AP) — David Beckham endured months of jeers from opposing fans after his World Cup expulsion made him public enemy No. 1 in English soccer.

Now he believes that's all behind him and he can concentrate on making Manchester United a winning team again. Right now, all United can do is draw.

Beckham was sent off in the game against Arsenal, which England eventually lost on penalties after surviving for 70 minutes with 10 men. Many fans blamed Beckham for England's elimination and, when the season started, he was booed and jeered wherever he played.

"A lot of people have said the treatment I got after the World Cup was unfair and I think it was, but I can't do anything about that," the Manchester United midfielder said.

"A lot of people really blew it out of proportion." But Beckham said it was not all down to the World Cup debacle, when he was sent off for petulantly kicking Argentina's Diego Simeone after he had been fouled.

"The reason fans abuse me is because they are jealous of me most of the time," said the fiance of Spice Girl Victoria (Posh) Adams.

"They see me doing well on the pitch, playing for Manchester United, playing for England, enjoying my life, playing football with a smile on my face."

"I suppose booing is a way of getting back at me. I think when people boo you it's a sign of respect really."

Beckham is unlikely to face any booing tomorrow when he turns out for Manchester United against Middlesbrough before 55,000 mainly United fans at Old Trafford.

That's unless the Reds fail to win for a fifth time in a row since the departure of assistant manager Brian Kidd.

Kidd left to take over as manager of Blackburn Rovers two weeks ago and United, with Alex Ferguson in sole charge, have drawn with Aston Villa, Tottenham and Chelsea in the league and Bayern Munich in the Champions Cup.

If United had turned any of those Premier League draws into wins, they would have been sliding top of the standings instead of two points behind Villa in second place.

A victory over a fifth-place Middlesbrough team managed by former United star Bryan Robson will put Ferguson's team top only because Villa aren't in action until Monday, when they go to sliding Charlton.

If United slip up tomorrow, Chelsea can move to the top by beating Tottenham at home.

Gianluca Vialli's team would be level with Villa on points and go top on goal difference.

Chelsea underlined their title potential by scoring a 1-1 tie at United on Wednesday. Vialli's team fell behind at Old Trafford but produced a strong second half fightback and fully deserved its equalizer through Gianfranco Zola seven minutes from the end.

Zola's form has returned after a barren 12-month spell in which he lost his place on Italy's World Cup team. He puts it down to becoming more of a team player than just a striker and goalscorer.

"I'm more devoted to the Chelsea cause," said the former Napoli and Parma forward, who scored his ninth goal of the season on Wednesday.

"I'm more important in this team and I think I have never scored as many goals in the first few games as I did this season."

Another big game at the weekend is sixth-place Arsenal against fourth-place Leeds on Sunday. The Gunners, who had eight regular first-teamers out through injury and suspension recently, are getting some of their star players back to full fitness.

Leeds, fielding six players under age 21, are going well under new manager David O'Leary and Monday's 2-0 victory over struggling Coventry was their fourth win in five games.

The Sky Blues are one of five teams falling away from the rest at the foot of the standings.

A five-point gap separates 15th place Newcastle from Charlton, who are 16th. Coventry are 17th and hopes for a home victory over mid-standings Derby to stay away from the relegation zone.

Last place Southampton, only 10 points from 17 games, host mid-standings Wimbledon while next-to-last Nottingham Forest, who have only one point more, host Blackburn, who are one place above.

Other games tomorrow are Liverpool-Sheffield Wednesday, Newcastle-Leicester and West Ham-Everton.

Premier League										
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts			
Aston Villa	17	9	6	2	27	17	33			
Man United	17	8	7	2	34	20	31			
Chelsea	17	7	9	1	27	17	30			
Leeds	17	7	8	2	26	14	29			
Sheff Wed	17	7	5	5	20	17	27			
West Ham	17	7	5	5	20	21	26			
Wimbledon	17	7	5	5	22	26	26			
Leicester	17	6	6	5	21	19	24			
Derby	17	5	8	4	17	16	23			
Tottenham	17	6	5	6	23	23	23			
Liverpool	17	6	4	7	22	22	22			
Sheff Wednesday	17	6	4	7	20	17	22			
Everton	17	5	5	7	15	12	22			
Newcastle	17	5	6	6	21	21	21			
Charlton	17	3	7	7	22	27	16			
Coventry	17	4	3	10	14	25	15			
Blackburn	17	3	4	10	15	24	13			
Notts Forest	17	2	5	10	15	30	11			
Southampton	17	2	4	11	12	34	10			



WATERWORLD — Russian swimming champion Alexander Popov.

(Gidi Avnery)

Israeli swimmers defeat 'jetlagged' Popov

By HEATHER CHAIT

A repeat performance at Sydney 2000 would be a modern day miracle.

Last night, Olympic swimmers Yoav Bruck and Eytan Orbach outshone the world and European champions Alexander Popov and Vladimir Selkov for the second

time in a row.

At the Jerusalem Cup held at the Goldstein Fourth Village, were on the Russian Popov, the Olympic champion in the 50 and 100 meters freestyle and the world champion in the 100m free. But last night, he was beaten first by Bruck in the 50m free and then by Orbach in the 100m backstroke.

Bruck led from the start, clocking 23:14, outside his best time of 22:16. Popov's time was 23:29

with Eran Gurumi third in 24:17. Both swimmers took the result in their stride.

"He's the world's best swimmer and the one I most respect," said Bruck.

The crowd's motivation worked for me but when we're both at our peak, there's nothing to talk about. Still, it's a once in a lifetime experience."

Popov, who was training in Australia with his coach Gennadi Turetzky, attributed his slow time to jetlag. "I should be in bed now," he joked, adding that "I'm not a machine."

The eyes of the tanned Russian, chosen by WHO magazine as one of the world's most beautiful people, light up when asked about Sydney. "I'll have an advantage there," he said.

In the last race of the evening, Orbach, fresh from his bronze

medal in the 100m backstroke at the European Championships (short course) in Sheffield, England earlier in the week, outswam both Popov and Selkov.

Orbach, whose new national record from Sheffield is 53:64, finished in 54:78 while Popov clocked 57:79 and Nir Tubis was third in 1:01:01.

Selkov was disqualified for remaining under the water more than the permitted 15 meters.

Bruck and Orbach thus completed their hegemony in the Jerusalem pool, adding to their medals which they started collecting on Wednesday.

In the 100m freestyle, Bruck's time was 49:92 while Popov could not crack 50 seconds, finishing in 50:05.

Orbach, in the 200m backstroke, won in 1:59:71, with Selkov behind on 2:01:01.

Israeli skate pair take first

By LIONEL GAFFEN

The fourth International Skate Israel '98 competition, which is rapidly becoming one of the premier ice skating events in the world, got off to a rousing beginning in front of hundreds of cheering supporters at Canada's Metula Center last night. Some 50 competitors from 19 countries are competing for the awards in four categories: dance couples, men, pairs and ladies. More than half of the skaters competed in the recent Winter Olympics at Nagano, Japan.

In the opening compulsory dance segment, labeled Tango Romantica, Israel's own Galit Chait and Sergei Sakhanovsky danced up a storm, outclassing the competition and finishing first. Giving chase are Nina Ulanova and Michail Sifunin of Russia and Agata Blozowska and Marcin Kozubek of Poland.

When asked how she feels about this level of the tournament, Chait commented that "the quality of the performers and the organization level equals that of the Grand Prix events."

The competition continues through tomorrow, with a closing Gala Exhibition at 20:00.

WINNING CARDS

In yesterday's final Hapayim daily chance drawing

8	Q	10	Q
9	Q	10	8
Q	Q	K	8

Korolev lifts Maple Leafs

TORONTO (AP) — Igor Korolev scored twice during a four-goal outburst in the second period as the Toronto Maple Leafs handed the Phoenix Coyotes only their fourth loss of the season, 5-2 Wednesday night.

Mats Sundin, Darby Hendrickson and Fredrik Modin also scored for the Leafs, who are 12-1-1 against Western Conference clubs this season.

Toronto became the first team this season to score five goals against Phoenix, which has the NHL's top defense.

Jeremy Roenick and Oleg Tverdovsky scored for the Coyotes (17-4-4), who played with injured star Keith Tkachuk.

Devils 6, Rangers 3
Jason Arnott scored two goals and linemates Petr Sykora and Patrik Elias added three assists apiece as New Jersey won at home.

Jay Pandolfo also had two goals and Sheldon Souray and Bobby Holik each scored once as the Devils used a three-goal second period to extend their season-high unbeaten streak to 6-0-2.

New Jersey, more offensive since Robb Florek replaced Jacques Lemaire as coach, has now scored at least five goals in each of its last five games — the first time that's happened in team history.

Panthers 4, Penguins 1
In Sunrise, Florida, Ray Whitney and Bill Lindsay scored goals 47 seconds apart in the third period to help the Florida Panthers beat the Pittsburgh Penguins.

Lindsay added an open-net goal with six seconds left, his fourth of the season.

Scott Mellanby had a goal and two assists, including his 300th career assist on the open-net goal, and Rob Niedermayer added two assists for Florida.

Red Wings 5, Bruins 3
Defensemen Nick Lidstrom and Larry Murphy each scored a goal as Detroit notched a home win.

Murphy (23 points) and Lidstrom (19) are two of the top scoring defensemen in the league.

The Red Wings, who have won six straight at home, ended Boston's three-game road winning streak. Chris Osgood made 23 saves, improving his career record against Boston to 6-1.

Mighty Ducks 6, Predators 1
Teemu Selanne and Travis Green each had two goals and an assist as Anaheim grabbed a home win.

Phoenix 2-0-2
Toronto 1-3-4
First Period: 1. Phoenix, Roenick 10 (Detuck, Tachuk), 10:22. 2. Phoenix, Tverdovsky 5 (Drake), 15:42. Second Period: 3. Toronto, Roenick 1 (Zetterstrom), 38 (pp), 4: Toronto, Modin 8 (Thomas, J.Smith), 54. 5. Toronto, Korolev 8 (Van Biesen), 5:19. 6. Toronto, Hendrickson 1 (Cote, Dorn), 4:52. Third Period: 7. Toronto, Sundin 10 (Thomas, Modin), 10:36. Shots on goal: Phoenix 9-13-12-34. Toronto 7-12-15-32. Goalsies: Phoenix, Tkachuk, Wells. Toronto, Joseph, A-15,726.

N.Y. Rangers 1-0-3
First Period: 1. New Jersey, Pandolfo 8 (S.Siverson, Rolston), 3:40. 2. New York, K.Siverson 7 (Grazzley, Leach), 12:18 (pp). Second Period: 3. New Jersey, Souray 1 (Sykora, Elias), 6:39. 4. New Jersey, Arnott 8 (Siverson, Elias), 11:25. 5. New Jersey, Holik 11 (Murphy, Souray), 12:15. Third Period: 6. New York, Gagne (Grazzley, Kozubek), 30 (pp). 7. New Jersey, Arnott 9 (Elias, Sykora), 6:23. 8. New York, Grazzley 8 (Sundstrom), 11:35. 10. New Jersey, Pandolfo 8 (Sundstrom), 15:14 (sh-sh). Shots on goal: New York 9-10-7-23. New Jersey 12-6-17-35. Goalsies: New York, Richter. New Jersey, Brodeur, A-10,04.

Pittsburgh 0-1-0-1
First Period: 1. Florida, Melnyk 6 (Niedermayer, Garbutt), 6:59. Second Period: 2. Pittsburgh, Strala 15 (Hatch), 11:39. Third Period: 3. Florida, Whitney 9 (Niedermayer).

Atlantic Division
New Jersey 18 7 3 39 87 70
Philadelphia 13 9 6 32 78 64
Pittsburgh 12 8 7 31 79 73
N.Y. Rangers 11 12 7 29 80 79
N.Y. Islanders 11 10 8 22 70 83

Northeast Division
Toronto 17 11 2 36 91 85
Buffalo 15 5 5 35 75 69
Boston 12 9 6 30 70 58
Ottawa 13 10 3 29 77 64
Montreal 8 8 16 5 21 65 85

Southwest Division
Carolina 14 11 5 33 88 67
Florida 10 11 4 26 70 75
Washington 8 16 3 19 57 74
Tampa Bay 8 19 2 18 63 105

Central Division
Detroit 17 10 7 35 92 69
St. Louis 9 10 7 25 66 65
Nashville 10 15 3 23 63 64
Chicago 9 16 4 22 68 97

Northwest Division
Colorado 13 12 3 29 69 72
Edmonton 13 14 3 29 83 80
Calgary 11 16 2 24 79 85
Vancouver 10 14 4 24 78 83

Pacific Division
Dallas 17 5 5 39 81 57
Phoenix 17 4 4 38 72 64
Anaheim 12 11 6 30 71 67
Los Angeles 8 18 3 19 60 80
San Jose 6 15 7 19 57 69

Leaders Haifa takes on Kfar Sava

By DEREK FATTAL

This weekend's 13th round of National League soccer action should prove lucky for leaders Hapoel Haifa. The Haifaies have a relatively easy fixture at home to Hapoel Kfar Sava tomorrow afternoon, and after dropping two points in their last outing against Maccabi Tel Aviv, they are expected to get back to the winning ways that have brought them 11 victories to date this season.

The big clash of the round pits Hapoel Haifa against Maccabi Tel Aviv at Teddy Stadium. The Tel Avivians have taken 16 points from their last six matches compared to Betar's 12, and the confidence is running high amongst Abraham Grant's men to come away from the capital tomorrow night with all the spoils.

Notwithstanding their patchy form of late, the Betars continue to get the ball into the net — 35 goals in 12 matches — and so the Maccabi

defense can be expected to weather some spirited pressure during the course of their visit.

Second-placed Maccabi Haifa will aim to keep one step ahead of Hapoel Petah Tikva. The greens are on the road at Maccabi Herzliya, while Giora Spiegel's team are involved in what could be a tough derby fixture against municipal foes Maccabi Petah Tikva.

At the other end of the standings, Maccabi Jaffa will hope for some blessed inspiration when they take to the field against Ironi Rishon LeZion. The team have purchased a wine cup that used to belong to former Sephardi Chief Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, and the players plan to drink from it before their home date against Ironi Rishon LeZion.

This weekend's National League soccer fixtures (kick off 14:30 tomorrow unless otherwise stated): Hapoel Tel Aviv v. Bnei Yehuda, Bloomfield Stadium, 15:00; Zafirim Holon v. Hapoel

Jerusalem: Maccabi Herzliya v. Maccabi Haifa; Hapoel Petah Tikva v. Maccabi Petah Tikva, 17:00; Hapoel Haifa v. Hapoel Kfar Sava, Kiryat Eliezer, 15:00; Betar Jerusalem v. Maccabi Tel Aviv, Teddy Stadium, 17:00; Hapoel Bet She'an v. Ironi Ashdod, Beit She'an, today, 14:00; Maccabi Jaffa v. Ironi Rishon LeZion, Gaon Stadium.

National League

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Hapoel Haifa	12	10	2	0	30	12	32
Maccabi Haifa	12	8	2	2	30	10	26
Hapoel Petah Tikva	12	8	0	4	27	16	24
Betar Jerusalem	12	7	1	4	35	16	22
Maccabi Tel Aviv	12	6	3	3	24	21	21
Hapoel Tel Aviv	12	6	3	3	20	15	20
Netan Hasharon	12	5	4	3	22	19	19
Hapoel Jerusalem	12	5	2	5	20	27	17
Hapoel Kfar Sava	12	5	2	5	18	22	17
Ironi Ashdod	12	4	4	4	19	16	16
Zafirim Holon	12	4	3	5	16	11	15
Ironi Rishon LeZion	12	3	4	5	19	28	13
Bnei Yehuda	12	3	2	7	16	25	11
Maccabi Herzliya	12	3	1	8	12	20	10
Maccabi Jaffa	12	1	1	10	7	32	4
Hapoel Bet She'an	12	1	1	10	6	34	4

Playoff picture comes into focus



NEW YORK (AP) — NFL playoff scenarios for this week as provided by the league:

AFC EAST

Buffalo — Can clinch playoff berth with a win or with a loss by less than 20 points and a Tennessee loss.

Miami — Can clinch playoff berth with a win and any of the following: a New England loss or tie; a Tennessee loss or tie; or a Buffalo loss by more than one point.

New England — Can clinch playoff berth with a win and a Tennessee loss.

New York Jets — Have clinched playoff berth. Can clinch AFC East title with a win. Can clinch first-round playoff bye with a win and a Jacksonville loss.

AFC CENTRAL
Jacksonville — Can clinch AFC Central title with a win or tie or a Tennessee loss or tie. Can clinch playoff berth with either a Miami loss or a Pats loss or tie.

AFC WEST
Denver — Have clinched AFC West title and home-field advantage throughout the AFC playoffs.

NFC EAST
Arizona — Can clinch playoff berth with a win and

a New York Giants loss or tie and a Tampa Bay loss.

Dallas — Can clinch NFC East title with a win or an Arizona loss.

Can clinch playoff berth with a Tampa Bay loss.

NFC CENTRAL
Minnesota — Have clinched NFC Central title and a first-round playoff bye. Can clinch home-field advantage throughout the NFC playoffs with either a win and an Atlanta win over Detroit by less than 68 points or an Atlanta loss.

Green Bay — Can clinch berth with a win or tie or either an Arizona loss or tie or a Tampa Bay loss or tie.

NFC WEST
Atlanta — Have clinched playoff berth. Can clinch NFC West title and a first-round bye with a win.

San Francisco — Have clinched playoff berth.

Tomorrow: New York Jets at Buffalo, Tampa Bay at Washington. Sunday: Baltimore at Chicago, Cincinnati at Pittsburgh, Kansas City at NY Giants, St. Louis at Carolina, San Francisco at New England, Tennessee at Green Bay, Indianapolis at Seattle, Oakland at San Diego, New Orleans at Arizona, Atlanta at Detroit, Philadelphia at Dallas, Jacksonville at Minnesota. Monday: Denver at Miami.

Inside

Popov's
poolside
manner

Page 23

Sports Editors
Joe Hoffman & Ori LewisUEFA moves
Under-18
finals
to Spain

By OFER ROWEN-ABELS

UEFA officially confirmed yesterday that Israel will not host the Under-18's soccer tournament due to the situation in the Gulf. The long-awaited decision states that the four-nation tournament that was supposed to have taken place in Israel earlier last month will be hosted by Spain in March.

The original changes which UEFA had supported were to hold the games here in January, but the new military tensions caused a change of venue as well as a date change.

Coach Ze'ev Zeltzer told *The Jerusalem Post* yesterday that the new schedule is problematic for his team. "It came as a great blow to us because all our players are supposed to join the IDF around that time, and two of them are even expected to take part in Maccabi Haifa's bid to reach the semifinals of Europe's Cup Winners Cup (Yossi Benayoun and Yaniv Katan)."

Israel will play hosts Spain, Andorra and England.

Former boxing
trainer Solomon
dead at 83

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Sam Solomon, known for training some of boxing's top heavyweights, is dead at 83.

Solomon died of heart failure at St. Ignace Nursing Home in West Philadelphia.

He trained Muhammad Ali, Leon Spinks and Sonny Liston before they became world champions.

Solomon began his career as a boxer, fighting more than 300 bouts as an amateur welterweight and lightweight. He started to box so he could defend himself from bullies in his south Philadelphia neighborhood, his family said.

Solomon became a trainer in 1950 because, he said, it was easier than getting punched. He was also a catcher in the Negro leagues.

Solomon retired as a boxing trainer 10 years ago, but continued to work with youngsters at the Haddington Recreation Center until a few years ago when he had to stop due to Alzheimer's disease.



Breaking the ice

Polish skaters Mariusz Siudek (above) and Dorota Zagorska show their stuff on the opening night of Skate Israel '98 at Metulla's Canada Center. Story, Page 23.

Home for the holidays



NEW YORK (AP) — David Stern is going to Aspen, Colorado for a week, and Billy Hunter is going home for the holidays, too.

It doesn't look like there will be a season until February — if at all.

The NBA lock-out was back on the slow track Wednesday with the two men actually bickering over who should call whom, and who made the first call last time.

"If we are going to meet, in all

probability it won't be until the week between Christmas and New Year's," Hunter said in a conference call with reporters. "We're going to find ourselves locked into a 12th-hour scenario."

"At this stage it's kind of like poker, and what they're trying to do is see who blinks first."

The sides have not met since Saturday, and no meetings are scheduled prior to this weekend, when Stern will leave for his residence in the Colorado ski resort town.

An NBA spokesman said Stern could be in New York within a few hours if developments warranted.

Hunter said he will fly home to San Francisco for the holidays if Stern leaves town.

The union director, in one of his

most detailed conversations of the 5½-month-old lockout, said the "drop dead" date for saving the season must be after the holidays.

"Things can't be too critical or extreme in view of the fact that commissioner Stern is planning a vacation in Aspen. If that's the case, I would assume that January 1 is not the drop dead date."

"We have looked at the proposed schedules, and we are aware if the season would start by February 1, there would be at least 40-42 games left. If you eliminate the All-Star game and maybe added a week or so, you could get up to 50-55 games."

In order to play 55 games, however, teams would have to play five games per week.

The sides are fighting over how to split \$2 billion in annual revenue.

The main points of contention remain how large a percentage of

revenues will be devoted to salaries and whether there will be an absolute maximum salary for players with more than seven years' experience.

The union made what Hunter called a "substantial concession" Saturday by offering a \$10 million limit on the salary in the first year of any new contract signed by a player with less than seven years' experience.

Although the situation looks bleak, both Hunter and deputy commissioner Russ Granik have said that a deal could be closed in less than 24 hours once the sides get back inside the bargaining room.

Lithuania beckons Sabonis

Portland Trail Blazers center Arvydas Sabonis may return temporarily to his home team in Lithuania for the second round of European Euro-League play if the NBA labor dispute continues, the team said yesterday.

Who could
miss better?Maccabi TA 'fails' to lose
by desired margin

By BRIAN FREEMAN

In a farcical battle between which basketball team could intentionally miss shots the best, Cibona Zagreb trounced visiting Maccabi Tel Aviv 78-60 in the final game of the EuroLeague's first stage last night in Zagreb.

Because the EuroLeague system created a situation in which it was actually advantageous for Maccabi to lose by more than 19 points, the Israelis blatantly tried to hand Cibona at least a 20-point win once Tel Aviv knew it had no chance to win the game.

Maccabi head coach Pini Gershon admitted to Channel 1 after the game that he ordered his players in the last few minutes — once it was clear Tel Aviv had no chance to win — to play for the 20-point loss, not that there was any way in any case to misinterpret the sad performance of both squads in the game's final moments.

But since it was not to Cibona's advantage to win by more than 19, the Croats in turn deliberately missed free throws and turned down open shots in what was a clear embarrassment to European basketball.

Maccabi and Cibona both finished the EuroLeague's first stage with 4-6 records, but Maccabi finishes in third place and Cibona in fourth because Tel Aviv won by 19 points in Yad Eliahu.

The third-place finish — which on the face of it should be desirable because it means Maccabi is now placed together with the bottom three teams in Group A in the second stage, while Cibona has to play Group A's top three teams twice — ironically puts the Israelis in a bind.

The third-place finish means Tel Aviv will have almost no chance to catch Efes Pilsen for second place (and earn home-court advantage in the Final 16 best-of-three series) in the six games of the competition's second stage, since Maccabi is three games behind the Turks, already lost twice to them and does not get a chance to play them again (the records from the first groups carry over to the new groups).

But the third place finish also — again ironically — puts Tel Aviv in greater danger of finishing in fifth place — and thus failing to make the Final 16 — because the "bot-

tom" three teams of Group A are not that weak.

Since Maccabi now has to face those three teams twice each, the bottom clubs — Varese, Vitoria and Saratov — have plenty of chances to overtake Maccabi.

Cibona, on the other hand, is now in a much better position, even though it finished fourth. It is in almost no danger of falling below fourth — and thus out of the Final 16 picture.

That is because Cibona carries with it a better record than the two teams under it — Manresa and Red Star Belgrade — and holds tie-breaker advantages over them.

Since Manresa and Red Star do not have the chance to play Cibona again and they have to play the same tougher teams Cibona does, it is unlikely they could make up the lost ground.

At the same time, Cibona has a better chance of capturing second from the fourth position in its new group than Maccabi does from its third position in its new group.

That is because even though Cibona has to play Group A's top three teams (Zalgiris Kaunas, Fenerbahce and Pau-Orthez) twice each, at least victories over them would boost the chances of finishing second and earning home-court advantage in the Final 16 series.

Cibona jumped out to a 36-26 halftime lead last night thanks to good outside shooting of its own and terrible field goal shooting from Maccabi, which arrived in Zagreb undermanned due to injuries to Borko Radovic and Doron Sheffer and the ineligibility for European games of new players David Benoit and Zdravko Radulovic (they are eligible when the EuroLeague's second stage begins on January 7).

Despite a fine effort from Oded Katash, who himself returned from injury to play his first game since last month, Maccabi was not able to narrow the margin in the second half — and then once the game was out of hand decided to go for the 20-point loss.

EuroLeague Group B				
Panathinaikos	10	10	8	20
Efes Pilsen	10	7	3	17
Maccabi TA	10	4	6	14
Cibona Zagreb	10	4	6	14
Manresa	10	3	7	13
Red Star Belgrade	10	2	8	12

Platt becomes Serie A's
youngest boss

GENOA (AP) — Sampdoria of Genoa introduced David Platt as its new coach yesterday, making the former England captain the youngest bench boss in Serie A. Platt, 32, replaces the fired

in 500 games with English sides Crewe, Aston Villa and Arsenal, plus Bari, Juventus and Sampdoria in Serie A. He also earned 62 national team caps, scoring 27 times, and captained England in 1993-94.

The club's record this year is 3-4-6, which has Sampdoria 14th in the 18-team league.

A stake in Newcastle
British cable company NTL Inc is buying a 6.3 percent stake in Premier League club Newcastle and is aiming to become majority shareholder, Newcastle said yesterday.

Newcastle said NTL had bought the stake from majority shareholder Cameron Hall Developments for 111.7 pence per share, and that Cameron Hall has also agreed to sell its remaining 50.8% Newcastle stake to NTL if a full bid is made.

English soccer preview,
Page 23

Luciano Spalletti and inherits a reeling club just one spot out of the relegation zone with little more than half the season remaining.

As a player, Platt was part of Sampdoria's last triumph, the 1994 Italian Cup. He retired in July after helping Arsenal to a rare Premiership and FA Cup double.

The midfielder totaled 209 goals

Brazilian soccer star
poses for gay magazine

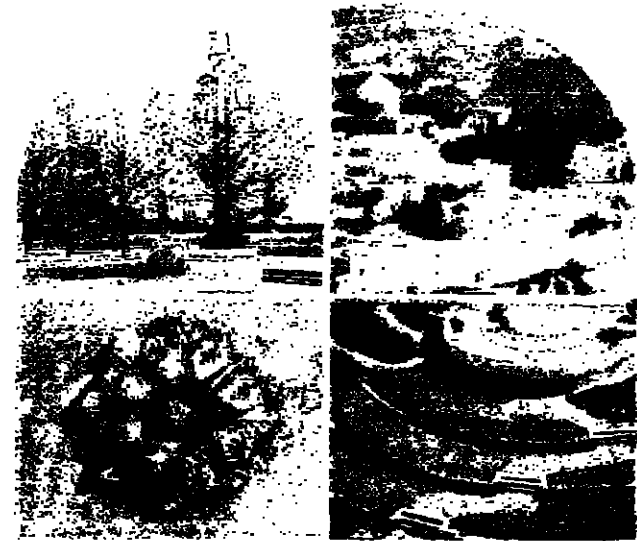
RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Cited by coaches as a symbol of modern soccer, Corinthians midfielder Vampeta is breaking new ground — as a model for a gay magazine.

Vampeta, a starter on Brazil's national team, will be the cover model on the January issue of *G Magazine*, the newspaper *Folha de Sao Paulo* reported yesterday.

The paper printed photos of Vampeta — fully clothed — and excerpts of his interview with the magazine, which will reach newsstands only after the national championship ends on December 23.

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Exhibition hoops

The NBA exhibition game in Atlantic City, NJ, is scheduled to be televised live on Channel 24 (Middle East TV) at 4 a.m. on Sunday.

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